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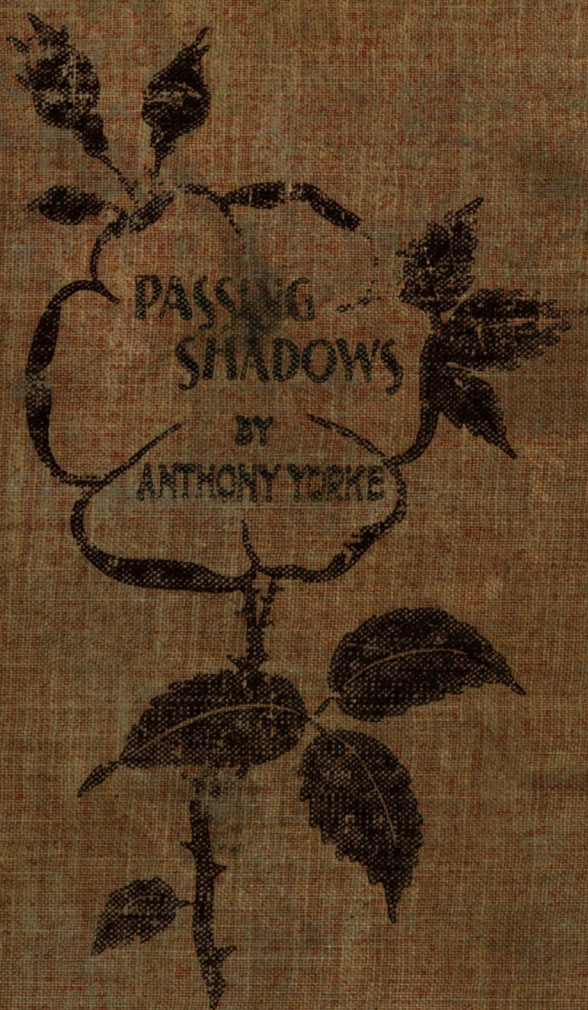
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PASSING SHADOWS.

PASSING SHADOWS.

A NOVEL.

By ANTHONY YORKE, pseud. of
Bernard James Reilly

THIRD EDITION.

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PASSING SHADOWS.

CHAPTER I.

"Into each life some rain must fall."

IT had been snowing heavily all day, and by evening the snow was deep upon everything. In the front room of a little house in Eldridge Street, in the lower East side of New York City, a young mother, weak and suffering, lay upon a bed which had been drawn near the bright fire in the grate. Her husband and a physician stood aside watching her anxiously.

"This is an unexpected change in your wife's condition, Mr. Crystal," the physician was saying, "and as the action of the heart is very weak, I am afraid that the chances are against her recovery."

"Do you think there is any danger of her dying?" the young husband asked, his voice sinking to a low whisper.

The doctor went over to the bed, and taking out his watch timed the sick woman's pulse, and looked long and earnestly at her. Then he came back to the husband to answer his question.

"I fear that she is in imminent danger."

The young man caught his breath, and a shadow

passed over his face. For several moments he said nothing, standing silent, in a dazed sort of a way.

"Is there any danger to-night, doctor?" he asked again. "Because *if* there is, I had better go for a priest."

"I would advise that," the physician replied. "I did not know you were Catholics. It is a little late," he continued, glancing at his watch; "but I meet the priests of your Church at all hours of the night in sick-rooms, so you will not have any difficulty in getting one now."

The husband came over to his wife's side, and taking her feverish hand in his, said tenderly, "The doctor thinks that as you are no better, it would be well to send for a priest."

"I wish you would," she whispered. "I feel so weak, I am afraid I may die."

The physician departed, saying that he would be around in the morning. A few moments later the young man stepped out of his door, and turned in the direction of the church. It was just one o'clock, he noticed, by a large clock hanging in a jeweller's window. The snow was still falling heavily, and the wind blew fiercely through the deserted street, pelting the fine snow against his face. A snow-plough drawn by eight horses came rushing along, scattering the snow off the car-tracks, while the driver yelled at his horses, and woke the sleepers in the tenements on both sides of the narrow street. After the snow-plough had passed quiet reigned again. When he had gone a little farther

on his way, the hurrying man encountered a policeman whom he knew standing in a hallway to avoid the sharp wind. The officer bade him good-evening, and asked him where he was going. On hearing the destination he joined him, saying that it was about time to go to the end of his beat. The two men hurried along the lonely streets, making their way with some difficulty through the deep snow, and at last reached the rectory. Just as they arrived there the driver of a passing car pulled up his puffing horses, and cried out to the officer :

“ Say, there’s a fight going on up the avenue. Hear that shot !”

The policeman slipped his long night-stick from its place in his belt, and started on a run.

Mr. Crystal ascended the steps leading to the rectory, and rang the bell.

A light was burning brightly in a room on the second floor of the house in which the priests lived, and two young priests were disputing with much warmth a mooted theological question. The elder, who was on a visit to the city, sat at a table, with several huge vellum-covered tomes before him. The younger man walked up and down, accenting his opinions with many gestures, after the fashion of nervous people.

Suddenly the bell rang clearly in the room.

“ A sick call !” he exclaimed, standing still.

“ Looks like it,” the other answered.

The young priest hurried downstairs, and unlocking the door, admitted a man into the hallway.

“ Good-evening, Father ; I’ve come to get you to go

on a sick call. I'm sorry to bring you out such a night, but my wife is pretty low, and she is anxious to see you."

The priest wrote the name and address in a little book which he carried in his pocket, and dismissing Mr. Crystal, said that he would be there immediately.

"Is it a sick call?" the older priest asked, looking up from the volume he was reading.

"Yes," the young man answered, beginning to disrobe himself of his cassock.

"Well, that's satisfactory."

"Satisfactory? I don't understand you."

"I mean that it's a satisfaction to know you have been called downstairs about something serious."

"But nobody would ring the bell as late as this unless it was an urgent sick call, would they?"

"Just wait a few weeks and see. I have been rung up as late as two o'clock, when I was an assistant here, by a man who wanted to know if I couldn't accommodate him with some cold victuals. I told him that I would accommodate him with a policeman if he did not leave immediately. After I closed the door, I heard him saying to himself, 'There's Christian charity for you. Ask a priest for food, and he tells you he'll get a policeman.'"

The young priest smiled as he slipped his coat on, saying, "I had better, then, expect all kinds of night calls here."

"Exactly; you won't feel disappointed then if a man rings you up after midnight, as one did me, to ask if the number of the house was 66, and when I told him

it was, he said, 'Thanks ; I'm looking for No. 75 ; I guess it must be across the way.' All kind of characters drift over here from the Bowery, so you had better keep yourself prepared for surprises."

The younger priest was ready to go, and started for the door, when the other stopped him.

"Where is the call?"

"Eldridge Street."

"What floor?"

"I don't know."

"Didn't you ask?"

"No ; should I have asked the floor?"

"Certainly ; always find out the floor, and whether it is in the front or back, and also which side it is on. That knowledge saves time and mistakes. I suppose you didn't think to tell the messenger to leave the door open, did you?"

"No ; I never thought of that."

"Well, probably he will close it, and then you'll have to ring the bell. But don't bother ; you'll find out all these things for yourself before you are a week on the mission. I would advise you also to carry a match-box full of matches with you. A man who wears glasses, as you do, needs some light when climbing up rear tenements."

The young priest started on his first sick call. He found it strange and lonesome when he entered the empty church, where the swaying light from the sanctuary lamp caused moving shadows on the walls. When he turned the key in the shining door of the tab-

ernacle the loudness of the noise startled him. He placed the Blessed Sacrament in his pyx, and extinguishing the two candles which he had lit, left the church and hurried on his way.

Walking with the quick step of an active young man, he was soon at the house, the door of which was open. He went up one flight of stairs, and seeing a light shining through a transom, judged that that must be the room. He was glad to find on knocking that he was right in his conjecture. He found the sick woman so weak that she could not speak to him above a whisper. After he had heard her confession and given her Holy Communion, he opened a small gold case containing the holy oils, and prepared to anoint her. He had finished the preliminary prayers, and was about to touch the eyes of the sick woman with the oil, when the husband, who was kneeling at the bedside, with his young baby in his arms, reached out his hand and caught hold of the priest's arm.

"What's the matter?" the young clergyman asked in astonishment.

"Does that mean that she is going to die?"

There was such a look of suffering in the man's eyes that the priest paused for a moment, and then laid the case containing the oils on a table beside him.

Calling Mr. Crystal to one side, he asked :

"Did the doctor tell you that your wife was very low?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Crystal; "he said she was a very sick woman, but I hardly realized that she could die, until I saw you beginning to anoint her."

The tears burst from his eyes, and he hugged his little one close to his bosom.

The priest hesitated for a moment, touched by the man's grief, and then suddenly his face brightened up as he said, "I'll tell you what we will do before I anoint your wife. This is my first sick call, and perhaps if we kneel down together—a young priest and a young husband—and say a prayer for your wife's recovery, God may find it in His mercy to spare her to you."

Hope came back to the heart of the suffering man at the priest's words, and together they knelt at the bedside of the sick woman, and said a short, earnest prayer for her recovery. The husband while he prayed looked at the wandering eyes of his wife as she awoke from the coma into which she had sunk, and then into the bright eyes of the baby in his arms. He seemed to be undecided about something for a moment, and then suddenly his face became set, and he held up his little one toward heaven, as if he were offering her in sacrifice.

The priest finished giving the last sacrament ; a woman from the floor above came to offer her services, and the priest left.

When he arrived home, to his surprise he found his friend still studying and comparing the volumes which were open on the desk. It was now nearly three o'clock. He stood still a moment, and then exclaimed :

"Well, *you* must be fond of theology ! Why didn't you go to bed ?"

The elder one looked up from his book, and not noticing what had been said to him, he began :

"You were saying that in the question of grace and free will—"

"Now, see here," the younger man interrupted, "grace and free will have no attractions for me at this time of night. I'm going to bed. I have to say the six o'clock Mass in the morning."

"Never mind, I'll say it for you, and you can say Mass later."

"Oh, no," the tired young priest feebly protested.

"Yes; I'll attend to the early Mass. I don't mind losing a little sleep when I come to the city. I get too much of it up in the country."

The next morning, when the physician called to see the sick woman, he found that her pulse was stronger and that she gave signs of growing better. By the following day the doctor said that her recovery was certain.

"I did not expect to find your wife alive the next morning," he communicated to the young husband a week later. "She showed all the signs of approaching death."

The young husband looked first at his wife, and then at the baby in her arms, and thanked God for so much happiness.

CHAPTER II.

*"Sweet childish days, that were as long
As twenty days are now."*

NEW YORK is a wonderfully cosmopolitan city. It is very German and it is very Irish. It has a French quarter of no mean dimensions, and there are more Italians on Manhattan Island than in most of the large cities of Italy. Then there is a Ghetto on the East side, and whole districts occupied almost solely by Bohemians and Hungarians. There are Cubans if not Spaniards, and there must be Swiss, or there would not be a house on Second Avenue for aged and infirm Swiss people. Then there is South Fifth Avenue and Sixth Avenue for the colored people ; nor must one forget to mention that there are a few people whose great-grandfathers were born in America.

It is not surprising, then, that Tom Crystal, having got a touch of fever while hunting Paynims from Lahore to Kandahar, to preserve peace in Her Majesty's dominions, and having received his discharge from the Army of India, should make his way to New York, whither so many from the old countries had preceded him.

He had been employed in a hardware shop in an Irish town before it had entered his head to become a

Tommy Atkins. He found employment in the same business shortly after his arrival in America.

When he had been with his firm about a year he was sent on business to a small village in Canada. Next to the hotel in which he lodged, there lived the notary of the village, together with his wife and their only unmarried daughter. Young Tom Crystal, after he was in the village a few days, made the acquaintance of the old notary, who together with Monsieur le Curé shared the honor of being able to speak "Englis'."

The young man first began chatting with the notary over the fence which separated the cottage from the hotel. Then he came through the gate and smoked a pipe with the old man. The third day he crossed the threshold of the quiet little home, and fell in love with the only remaining daughter of the notary's house, who likewise fell in love with him.

"Can I have Mademoiselle Annette?" he asked.

"No! No!" the old man answered. "She is our only child now, and, also, she is too young. Besides, Monsieur Crystal, without meaning any offence, I must say that we do not know you."

"As regards the last objection," replied the young man, "it is easy to settle that. You can write to the junior member of the firm for which I work; you know him, as he was born in this village; he will tell you all about me."

But no argument could induce the old man to part with his daughter.

"If you come back next year, and you are still of the

same mind, then I will listen to you," said he, thus thinking he had settled the question.

Young Tom Crystal, like Jacob, returned to his work to wait patiently for his Rebecca. Regularly every month he wrote the old notary, sending his love to Annette. The months slipped by rapidly, and one fine day in June, while Annette was trimming the honeysuckle vine which covered the porch of the little cottage, and the notary was smoking his pipe filled with strong Canadian tobacco, the faithful lover appeared at the gate.

The old father saw it was useless to try to hold out any longer against *le jeune Irlandais*, and so before the end of the month Monsieur le Curé married the young lovers, and little girls in white strewed flowers in their pathway.

Tom Crystal brought his bride to live in Eldridge Street. The houses in that street had been occupied formerly by one family. When New York began to grow toward the north, those who could afford to live in private dwellings moved uptown, and the little houses they left were then occupied by several families. Most of these people had come over from Ireland or Germany, hoping to find a more prosperous life in the new country. Of late years the neighborhood has changed again. A new people, the "Children of the Ghetto," have flocked in great numbers to this part of the city, and nearly all who lived in Eldridge Street when Tom Crystal first took up his residence there, have now sought new homes in Brooklyn or in upper New York.

The little brick house in which the Crystals lived, flanked as it was on both sides by tall, yellow mosque-like flats, looked cute. A half-dozen steps, on both sides of which was a curiously carved iron railing, led up to it. Its little door was as white as a baby's coffin. At night, the light in the hallway, shining through a strip of orange-colored cloth, gave a touch of color to the entrance. The white metal knob and the bells shone like silver.

There were two children born to the Crystals, and both were girls. The elder was called Gabrielle and the younger Agnes.

Gabrielle was dark, like her mother; Agnes was fair, like her father. There was only a year's difference in the ages of the two girls, and when they were old enough they were sent to the parish school.

Even before they attended school, Agnes, much to the amusement but secret satisfaction of her parents, declared her intention of becoming a nun.

This inclination to a religious life manifested itself very early in her. One day there passed through Eldridge Street two "Little Sisters of the Poor," who were begging aid for their Home. Agnes, as soon as she saw them, ran to them, and gave them a pressing invitation to come and see her mother.

The sisters followed the child, delighted with her prattle. When they met Mrs. Crystal and heard her stories of her little daughter's desire to become a nun, one of the sisters turned to Agnes and said, "So you would like to become a nun?"

"Oh, yes!" the child responded with considerable enthusiasm.

"Suppose," continued the sister, "that I take you along with me now, and make you a nun?"

"Oh, that will be good!" the child cried. "Mamma, get me my jacket, so I can go right now."

She ran to the window and shouted to Gabrielle, who was in the yard playing with a doll.

Either the fascination of the doll was too great, or else that was not one of Gabrielle's days for feeling any attraction to convent life, for she merely looked up at her excited sister, and then with all the callousness of Charlotte, "who went on cutting bread and butter," she returned to her play, regardless of the golden opportunity.

The sister had some difficulty, once she had fired the hopes of the little girl, to reconcile her to the thought of putting off her entry to the convent to a later day.

Agnes, as soon as the invitation was given her, rushed about the room looking for her jacket and hat, and called upon her mother to get her father and Gabrielle and for all to go to the convent.

The visit of the sisters was not without its effect.

A short time afterward Mrs. Crystal noticed that her children remained in one of the rooms for a long time, and that they were unusually quiet.

Suddenly the door opened, and in marched Agnes, dressed as a nun. She had, with the help of Gabrielle, bound a strip of white linen about her forehead. A

small black shawl was used for a veil, and a black apron belonging to Mrs. Crystal served to make a long dress for the little nun. A rosary hanging at her side completed the effect.

"See, mamma!" the child cried with delight; "I am a sister."

Mrs. Crystal's face lit up with a smile such only as God gives to mothers, and gathering her little one to her breast, she covered her with kisses.

Gabrielle had enjoyed the whole thing hugely until she saw Agnes getting all the kisses, whereat she burst into tears, and would not be comforted until her mother promised her that when she grew big she could become a school-teacher, which occupation had a special attraction for Gabrielle, whose great delight was to assemble an assortment of babies on the front stoop and put them through a rigorous catechizing.

From the first day that the children went to school Agnes took everything very seriously; Gabrielle was too full of plans to long remain faithful to any one of them.

Sometimes, after listening to the young novice who taught them tell of the glorious actions of one of the saints, Gabrielle's heart would be on fire with enthusiasm for God's cause. A little later the fire would cool and go out, and then she would become of the earth, earthy.

One day the novice, who was bubbling over with spirituality, gave her class a lecture on humility, dilating on the beauty of that particular virtue, telling them

how necessary a virtue it was, and ending the discourse by quoting the words of Scripture, "But when thou art invited, go sit down in the lowest place, that when he who invited thee cometh, he may say to thee, 'Friend, go up higher.'"

Gabrielle was much impressed with the necessity of humility, and the next day on her arrival at school she took her place at the foot of the class instead of near the head, where she rightfully belonged, on account of her almost perfect recitations the day before.

She sat there for over an hour, but the novice never noticed the act of humility. At last Gabrielle's virtue exhausted itself, and she cried out in despair, "Sister, I took the lowest place, and you never once asked me to go up higher!"

Sometimes Gabrielle's religious practices resulted fatally.

It was the beginning of the season of Lent, and the novice gave her charges a lecture on the necessity of mortification, suggesting that each one of the children give up something during the holy season.

Gabrielle always took three pieces of sugar in her coffee every morning. On Ash Wednesday she started in to take but two during the forty days of Lent. She had found out that Sundays do not properly belong to Lent, so on the Sundays she took her usual allowance.

On Easter Sunday she was richer by forty pieces of sugar, which she had carefully preserved. She ate the forty pieces at one sitting. She did not eat anything else the rest of that day.

But it was not only on religious subjects that Gabrielle's teacher lectured. She trained them in the rules of etiquette, so as to make "little ladies" of them. Gabrielle was apt to take things literally.

One day the novice took her visiting to another convent. They sat in an open, crowded car. After they were there a few moments the car stopped and a passenger entered. The new passenger took the seat directly behind Gabrielle. The child was watching her chance, and as soon as the new arrival was seated, jumped up, and in a voice which could be heard easily in all parts of the car, she exclaimed, "Please excuse my back!" and then sat down again. The passengers were convulsed with laughter, to the surprise of Gabrielle and the mortification of the novice, who never expected that the child would take her instructions so literally.

One more incident may be worth recording. It is taken from the life of Agnes. When she was nine years old she was so possessed with the idea of becoming a nun, that she resolved to take measures to make her future sure.

Her mother looked all over the house for her one day, and finally discovered her daughter on the roof. It was a cold, raw afternoon in the early winter, and Agnes, with a little thin shawl pinned about her head, had climbed up the ladder leading to the roof of the house. When she got there she took from her pocket a number of scraps of paper, and flung them up toward heaven, the wind carrying them far out of sight.

On each scrap of paper was written one of the ejaculations from the Litany of Loretto, with a request in this way :

“ Queen of Angels, make me a nun.”

“ Morning Star, make me a nun.”

“ Tower of Ivry, make me a nun.”

Sometimes, as in the last request, Agnes was somewhat uncertain in her spelling.

Thus the two children lived in a golden dream, and were very happy.

CHAPTER III.

"A malady most incident to maids."

THE years passed by, and Gabrielle and Agnes grew to be young women, Agnes still fully bent on becoming a nun, and Gabrielle, now less impressionable, content to remain in the world.

It had been definitely decided that Agnes Crystal would enter the convent in about a year's time, but as yet she had not made up her mind as to the particular order of nuns she would join. Gabrielle went out "to business" every day. Agnes remained at home and did the housework.

Gabrielle had celebrated her nineteenth birthday, and Agnes was eighteen. They had grown up quietly, and while it was expected that one day Gabrielle would fall in love and marry, neither Mr. Crystal nor his wife nor Agnes had ever given the matter a moment's real thought. To them it was some vague thing that might happen before she was thirty. But Gabrielle had fallen in love before she was nineteen, and not having the courage to mention the fact to any one, she followed the example of Viola, and hid her love.

Little by little, however, the keeping of this secret became a burden to her, and she would fain share it with some one else. After several weeks of delibera-

tion she finally decided to make a confidante of her sister Agnes.

They were sitting together in the parlor one evening late in July. Agnes was reading and Gabrielle waiting for her courage to grow strong within her, so that she could introduce the subject that was closest to her heart. After many moments of suspense Gabrielle began.

"Have you fixed on any particular time as yet for entering the convent, Agnes?" she asked, clearing her throat with a little cough, as she found the words did not come readily to her lips.

Agnes laid down the book of a circulating library which she was reading, and looked up in surprise at her sister, on account of the abruptness of the question.

"No; I have not decided definitely on any day," she replied. "I thought of fixing on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, but mother asked me to wait a little longer, so I do not know at what particular time I shall enter. I have not even made up my mind as yet which order I shall join."

"I shall be sorry to lose you when you go," Gabrielle began again; "but as long as it is your wish, I suppose we shall have to become reconciled to it. After all, perhaps you are doing the best thing. You will get away from the world and its worries, and I can assure you that that alone is a great happiness."

Agnes opened her eyes wide with astonishment, and looked closely at her sister, to see if she was in earnest. Being convinced from the tone and countenance of

Gabrielle that she was talking seriously, Agnes exclaimed :

“ Why, Gay, how strange you talk ! What do you know about the worries of the world ? ”

“ More, Agnes, than you think, ” Gabrielle answered, and then hung her head and lapsed into silence.

“ I don't understand you at all, Gay. Has anything happened to grieve you ? ”

Gabrielle rested her arm on the side of the chair, and covering her eyes with her hand, said :

“ I suppose there is no use in crying over spilled milk, but I wish that father had moved uptown three years ago, when he was thinking of doing so. ”

This came as a little shock to Agnes.

“ Why do you wish that, Gay ? I never heard you say before that you were dissatisfied with this house. ”

“ Oh, it's not the place we live in which makes me unhappy, ” Gabrielle hastened to reply ; “ it's— ” a long pause followed, during which Agnes waited in vain for the completion of the sentence.

“ What is the matter, Gay ? ” the younger girl asked, at the same time drawing her chair a little nearer, and placing her hand sympathetically on her sister's arm.

Gabrielle took down her hand from before her face, and caught at the long lace curtain trembling in the breeze which came in at the window, bringing with it the din of the streets—the shouts of children at play, the cries of venders, the belated tinkling of a hokey-pokey bell, and now and then the stray notes from the

violin of a musician, who was tuning his instrument for the night's work in a roof-garden theatre.

"Do tell me, Gay," Agnes again pleaded, as Gabrielle had not yet answered her first entreaty. "You'll be better able to stand it, if you share your secret with me."

"I'll tell you if you promise you won't be angry with me," answered Gabrielle.

"Certainly not ; why should I be angry ?"

"Well," said Gabrielle, knitting her two hands together and bowing her head, "I'm—I'm in love."

"Oh !" exclaimed Agnes in astonishment.

Gabrielle looked at her sister nervously.

"I knew you wouldn't like it, Agnes, when I told you ; but I can't help it. It's all father's fault."

"What has father got to do with it ?"

"He should have moved away from here several years ago," Gabrielle answered impatiently, "and then I would have been spared all this misery."

"But you might have fallen in love if we lived elsewhere," Agnes argued.

"No, I wouldn't," Gabrielle replied emphatically ; "I could have helped it then, but now I simply cannot help it."

"But you have not told me as yet with whom you are in love," said Agnes, anxious for more information.

Gabrielle's answer was a helpless sigh.

"I wish you would guess, and not force me to tell you everything," she said after a pause.

Agnes accepted the invitation, and made several

guesses. Finally she acknowledged that she could not imagine with whom her sister was in love.

"Well, then I can't tell you," said Gabrielle. "I have made a mistake, and now I see it clearly, and I'll say no more about it"—her voice dropped to a whisper—"even if it kills me." She rose from her chair to leave the room, but Agnes stood in front of her, pleading to hear the name of the young man, and assuring her that she approved of it already. Gabrielle was induced to take her seat again.

"I thought you would have guessed his name, and saved me from all this worry; but it seems I must do everything myself." Then after a little she continued, "It's Jack Fulton."

"What!" cried Agnes, "Jack Fulton?"

Gabrielle's head sunk into her hands, and she said despairingly: "I knew that would be just the way you would take it. If mamma and papa heard of it, they would say I must have taken leave of my senses."

She rose for the second time to go.

"I thought, Agnes, that you, at least, would have given me a word of comfort."

Her tone brought Agnes back to a realization of things present.

"O Gay, forgive me! I didn't mean to hurt you. I was only surprised. It seems so strange."

"Yes, I suppose it is strange. I suppose it's even foolish; but it's so, and I can't help it."

"Well, you're not bound to help it. I am sure that some day you would have lost your heart anyhow, so

we ought to have been prepared for it. I admit, however, that your falling in love with Jack Fulton does seem singular."

"Yes, and hopeless, too," Gabrielle added.

The two girls were still standing in the middle of the room.

"Let us sit down, Gay," Agnes said. "You may be certain that I am ready to do anything I can for you."

Gabrielle, thus appealed to, was glad to accept the opportunity to discuss her love for John Fulton. When they were seated Agnes opened the subject by asking, "How long, Gay, do you think you have been in love with Jack?"

Gabrielle thought for a moment, and then replied, "I believe about five months. I always had a school-girl liking for him, as you know, but now"—dropping her eyes—"I really love him."

"Do you think that he suspects that you love him?" Agnes asked.

"I'm sure he does not. He goes on treating me as if I were a school-girl in short skirts. Oh," she exclaimed, as her feelings mastered her, "if he would only not be so stupid and see that I am a woman and no longer a child, I would be satisfied!"

She had been playing with the window curtain, but she tossed it away from her angrily as she thought of the hopelessness of her case.

Agnes looked at her a moment with some concern. Gabrielle, though older, had always leaned a little on her, and now expected consolation in her new trouble.

"Jack certainly likes you, Gay. I can see his eyes light up with pleasure whenever you come into the room."

"Perhaps so; but I can assure you that it is not what the poets call 'love-light.' I know that he likes me, but that is a very great distance from loving me. He is always kind to me, but it is the kindness which 'grown-ups' show to children. His kindness only makes me feel the more surely that he still looks upon me as a child, and how can I ever expect him to return my love if he will never see that I have become a woman?"

"That certainly is a difficulty," Agnes admitted, bowing her head. "He has known you so long that I suppose it is hard for him to realize that you are not now a young girl."

"I don't see why it should be; I don't act like a baby, I hope?"

"Not at all," Agnes hastened to reply. "His eyes have not yet been opened, that is all."

"Perhaps I had better get a sign and have printed on it, 'I am a woman,' and carry it around my neck."

There was a sparkle of indignation in Gabrielle's eyes and her tone was sarcastic. Agnes could not help smiling a little at the idea. A pause followed, during which Agnes tried to imagine a way out of the difficulty, so as to offer some encouragement to her sister; but no solution of the problem presented itself.

At this moment the sound of music from the street below brought a welcome distraction to Agnes Crystal, giving her a longer time to think over Gabrielle's case.

One would not imagine, at least from a first glance at the two girls, as they drew their chairs nearer to the open window, that they were sisters.

Gabrielle was about medium height, with black eyes, black hair, and a complexion such as maidens have in Provence and Castile. Agnes was a trifle taller, with blue eyes and a faint pink color in her cheeks, which when it flamed one might be deceived into believing was hectic. It had often been said that they were two of the prettiest girls that walked on Grand Street. That was considered at one time a great compliment by young ladies living on the East Side.

Agnes Crystal had that delicate prettiness which is peculiar to New York girls who sell bonbons in the fashionable candy stores or perfumery over the counters of the big department houses. Gabrielle had, on the contrary, a foreign look, a round, dark face. "Shust de face to paint a peekshure from," remarked a Bohemian artist to Gabrielle's mother, when he asked permission to have her daughter give him some sittings.

If you watched the two girls closely, however, you would notice a similarity in the profile of their faces, and also little tricks of gesture, which told that they were sisters. Gabrielle got her swarthy complexion from her French Canadian mother. Agnes took her bright blue eyes and her fair face from her Irish father.

When the two girls looked down on the crowded street, they saw, what is frequently seen in that neighborhood, a detachment of Grand Army men, with ragged

flags, returning from a funeral. A band of musicians walked before the men, and the musicians were in turn preceded by a solid vanguard of children, very dirty and very happy-looking. When the procession had passed, and the strains of the much-played "Marching through Georgia" were heard only faintly by the two girls, Agnes opened the conversation again.

"I have been trying to think, Gay, what would be the best course for you to take, but at present I see nothing for you to do except to wait patiently."

"You don't think it wrong of me to have fallen in love with Jack, do you? I mean, you don't consider it a sin?"

"What an idea!" she exclaimed. "Why should I consider it a sin?"

"Well, I didn't know. You yourself would never have done it, so I wasn't sure but what you might condemn me for it."

"Because I am going to enter a convent, is that a reason why you shouldn't fall in love and get married?" Agnes asked. "I hope you do not consider that I am such an eccentricity as not to be able to understand your falling in love," she continued. "I am afraid that I will have to hang a sign around *my* neck with the legend, 'I am a woman,' so that my sister will be mindful of the fact."

Gabrielle, noticing that Agnes was a little hurt, hastened to explain that her words had been misunderstood.

The matter rested there for that evening. Gabrielle felt relieved, now that she had told her love to some

one, and especially to one as sympathetic as her sister. Agnes, on the contrary, did not find any comfort in the new knowledge she had gained. John Fulton, she reasoned, had known Gabrielle since she was a small girl, and it did not seem likely that he would now fall in love with her. Moreover, he was very much devoted to his mother, and probably would not marry while she lived. The whole thing was most unfortunate. It would only make misery for Gabrielle, and also for John Fulton if it ever came to his knowledge. She would gladly have counselled her sister to crush this affection out of her heart as a thing never to be realized, but she understood Gabrielle's character well enough to know that such advice would avail nothing. Altogether, after thinking the whole matter over, she concluded that it was better to humor her sister and trust to the future for a solution.

The following evening Gabrielle proposed to Agnes to go walking. Agnes knew what the proposition meant, and willingly assented to it.

Grand Street, garishly brilliant, was chosen by Gabrielle for the evening's walk.

"I would like very much to ask you a question, Agnes, only I am afraid it might shock you," Gabrielle began, after they had gone a little way on their walk.

"You might try the experiment," Agnes replied, "and if I feel myself getting shocked, I'll tell you," she added, a smile playing about her mouth.

Gabrielle was silent for a moment, and her lips moved, as if she was practising the exact words she would use.

"What I wish to know is, would you consider it a sin to pray for a change to come over Jack?" There was a faint tremor of fear in her voice, for she feared an affirmative answer. She did not wait for Agnes to reply, but added hastily, by way of explanation, "I do not ask you to pray for him to love me; that would not be proper I know; but only to pray that he will begin to look upon me as a young woman almost twenty years of age, and not the Gay Crystal for whom he used to do hard sums when I went to school."

Agnes was puzzled, and her hesitation showed it. Gabrielle watched her, and growing excited under the suspense, exclaimed earnestly:

"I do wish, Agnes, you would pray for me. You are fine on praying. You always get what you ask."

Agnes laughed loudly, a thing she rarely did.

"I really do feel great sympathy for you, Gay, but I must confess I am a little puzzled. I never did pray for anything like what you have mentioned to me."

The crowd on the street had grown so large, and the girls found walking so difficult, that Gabrielle proposed to pass over to the other side, which was less frequented, as one side of a busy street always is. When they had done so Agnes continued:

"I don't believe, however, that it would be wrong for me to pray for such an intention. It might not be proper in your case for you to pray for yourself," she went on, feeling her way like a doubtful casuist; "but it can hardly be wrong for me to pray for such a temporal good for you."

"That's just it!" exclaimed Gabrielle, with no little excitement, much pleased at her sister's solution of the intricate case of conscience.

"You pray for my intention, Agnes, and I'll go around among the poor and the sick, and bring them some good things to eat. I am sure if we both work together in that way a change will soon come over Jack."

Agnes turned away her head to hide a smile. Most younger sisters, had they been in her place, would have laughed at Gabrielle's plan and bid her do battle for herself in the field of love.* Agnes Crystal, however, was glad of the chance to rouse Gabrielle from the discouragement which she had noticed taking hold of her sister frequently of late, and so she entered heartily into her sister's scheme, though in her own mind she had just a little scruple about praying for anything even remotely connected with love affairs. They were by choice a thing apart from her. She determined, therefore, as a means of quieting her conscience, not to say any prayers that evening for her sister's intention, but to lay the case before her confessor the following day, and see whether he would approve of her mixing up in such affairs. And so the matter rested when the girls had finished their walk.

Early next morning, before the stillness of the house was broken by the noise of the milkman rattling the tin pail outside of the door, Gabrielle was actively engaged preparing some delicacies to bring to the sick whom Agnes visited.

"I'm going to remain home from work to-day," she remarked as they both sat down at the breakfast-table, "so that I can bring a few dainties to those two sick children who live in that miserable house in Forsyth Street. I am sure the jellies and the chicken I have prepared will refresh the poor little things," she added pathetically.

"Oh, no ; don't stay at home from work for that reason !" Agnes exclaimed ; "this evening will do just as well. They are not suffering at present. Besides, Gay," she continued, in a gentle, expostulating manner, "you must try to be a little patient. Heaven doesn't work in such a hurry."

Gabrielle, when she fully realized the humorous side of her impetuosity, threw her head back and laughed.

"I am very naïve ; don't you think so, Agnes ?"

"In some things perhaps," Agnes answered ; "but you are certainly impetuous."

CHAPTER IV.

*"She only said, 'My life is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said."*

IN the evening when Gabrielle returned from work Agnes met her at the door. There was a gleam of pleasure in the younger sister's eyes, which was sweetness to Gabrielle.

"You have good news which concerns me, Agnes, haven't you?" Gabrielle asked, as she paused in the doorway.

"Yes, I have ; how did you know?"

"I saw it in your eyes."

"Can you guess what it is?"

"Hardly."

"Well, then, I must tell you. I found out to-day that it is quite proper for me to pray according to the intention which you proposed last evening."

"Is that so?" Gabrielle exclaimed, as she caught hold of her sister's arm. "How do you know? Been to confession?"

"Come upstairs," was Agnes's answer, "and I'll tell you all about it, while I am getting the supper ready. Mamma and papa must have been delayed, as they have not yet returned."

The two girls ascended the short flight of stairs which

led to their apartments. Gabrielle loosened her veil, and taking off her hat, sat down to rest and to listen, while her sister prepared the evening meal and related her experience.

"You know the little Polish church around the corner?" Agnes began. "Well, I made a visit there this afternoon, and I asked the old French missionary priest who has been stopping there for some time, to hear my confession. When I had finished I told him I had a scruple about a certain matter, and that I would like to have it settled. He told me to state it, so I laid my singular case of conscience before him."

"What did he say?" Gabrielle inquired anxiously.

"He said—oh, those eggs will be altogether too hard!" exclaimed Agnes, just remembering that she had forgotten all about the eggs she had begun to boil before Gabrielle's arrival.

"Never mind about the eggs," Gabrielle protested; "I like hard-boiled eggs."

What she meant by that statement was, "I like hard-boiled eggs better than suspense." It was a question of two evils, so she chose what to her appeared the lesser. But not a word would Agnes utter until she had rescued the half dozen eggs from the saucepan and placed them safely in a dish. Being importuned several times by her impatient sister to begin, she started her story once more.

"As I was saying, I laid my case of conscience before the old missionary father, and he decided that it was no harm for me to pray for your intention. He even

went further, and surprised me very much by saying that it would not be wrong for both of us to pray, not only for Jack to cease considering you a child, but also for him to return your love."

"Oh, the dear old priest!" Gabrielle exclaimed in admiration. "Didn't some one mention to us, Agnes, that the old French missionary stopping at the Polish church knew more theology than any priest excepting the Pope?"

Agnes could not remember ever having heard such a declaration, and she busied herself about the fire to hide her smiling face.

"Did he say anything else?" Gabrielle asked a little anxiously.

"Yes; after he had settled my scruples satisfactorily he said, 'My dear child.' " Agnes's imitation of the old priest greatly amused Gabrielle. "Oh, that's mean, isn't it, Gay, for me to imitate such a good old man? I won't do it any more; I'll tell you what he said in good English."

"Tell me in any kind of language you like, only tell me quickly," Gabrielle responded.

"'My dear child,' he said, 'if it were not that I have so many prayers to say myself, I would be glad to offer up my poor prayers with you and your sister. But then I think the young man has a very poor chance to escape, with you two praying for him.' "

Gabrielle interrupted the narrative herself this time, by laughing.

"He must have enjoyed what you told him very much, Agnes."

"You would say so if you could have seen how he was amused when I told him my scruple. I could see his face wreathed in smiles as I peered through the framework of the confessional."

The supper was now ready, and the two girls sat down to eat it.

"When I was about to leave the confessional," Agnes continued, "he said to me, 'After you have caught your fish, I hope you will not forget to pray for a poor old man, who has got the rheumatism very bad since he came to your country.' I promised him I wouldn't forget to pray for him, but I don't think he needs anybody's prayers. He looks just like one of those old saints one sees in pictures. The circle of snow-white hair around his head is for all the world like a saint's halo."

"Perhaps he is a saint," remarked Gabrielle, who would have canonized him immediately if she had the power.

Agnes shook her head and answered doubtfully, "I don't know ; it's very hard to be a saint."

Gabrielle bubbled over with happiness on account of the confessor's decision.

"I am sure," she declared, emphasizing her words with a gesture, "that I will never forget to pray for that dear old priest all my life—if I get what I want," she added, as an afterthought.

Agnes smiled at the condition

"But suppose your wishes are not satisfied, what then?" she asked, as she helped her sister to another cup of tea.

"My dear," Gabrielle answered, looking up at her, with a smile, "you must not be making such suppositions. It argues a want of faith. Are we not taught to pray always with the firm faith that we will get what we pray for?"

"Yes, that's true; but don't you remember what the Gospel says, 'You do not get what you ask, because you ask amiss'?"

Gabrielle hastened to swallow a spoonful of hard-boiled egg, and then replied, "I know that text very well, but in this case the shoe doesn't fit, because I am not asking amiss; I am asking a Mister, and I'll be broken-hearted if I don't get him," she added, as the smile that lit up her face for a moment was swept away by the look of sadness which followed.

"Why, you've eaten three of those hard-boiled eggs, Gay!" exclaimed Agnes, holding up her hands in horror. "You always have a bilious attack after eating one; I suppose you will now be afflicted with three attacks."

"I never did agree very well with eggs," Gabrielle admitted, crushing one of the shells in her hand, "but I am not afraid of them any longer; I have found an antidote."

She put her hand in the pocket of her dress and drew out a package of chewing-gum.

"I don't see why any one wants to be afraid of hard-boiled eggs when one stick of this will digest two thou-

sand five hundred grains of food." She filled her mouth with the gum, and then smiling offered the package to her sister.

After Agnes had cleared the supper-table and finished the housework, she joined Gabrielle, who was seated at the piano in the parlor.

The two girls had not been there long when a knock was heard. Gabrielle ceased her playing, and going to the door, admitted a young man.

"O Jack," she cried, "I'm so glad you dropped in! I have a couple of new songs from that funny opera, *The Gondoliers*, which I want you to sing to-night, before you and papa start those interminable games of chess."

The young man smiled at the allusion, as he picked up a sheet of music from the piano. "How do you know that I came to play chess?"

"Oh, I know surely that you did. It's the strangest thing how papa can always tell just the evening you are going to pay us a visit. Do you know," she continued, half closing her eyes and looking up at him, "I think that there must be some kind of mental telegraphy between you and papa. It's so odd how often we have instances of it. The last night you were here, for example, papa announced that he was going out on some business, and would not be home till near eleven o'clock; and then suddenly, as if a current of electricity had struck him, he changed his mind, and said, 'I think that I won't go out, after all, as it is likely Jack Fulton will come in this evening.'"

"Let me see," the young man remarked thoughtfully. "About what time did your father make that guess?"

"About a quarter to seven o'clock, wasn't it, Agnes?" Gabrielle asked.

"Yes," Agnes replied, smiling; "but you must remember that our dining-room clock is just a quarter of an hour slow. It is necessary to take that fact into consideration if you go building up any theory."

"That is a timely explanation, Agnes," he said; "it fits in very well with what happened at one half minute past seven o'clock that evening. Just at that time I felt a peculiar burning sensation in my left ear. I did not mind it very much then, though I have often heard that when one's ear burns, it is a sign the possessor of the burning ear is being talked about. I shouldn't wonder, Gay, but what you are right in your theory. Your father began to think of me at seven o'clock sharp. At that hour the magnetic fluid left him, walked downstairs, then up into my house, and reached my ear about one half minute after seven, making due allowance for the clock, which is fifteen minutes slow."

They discussed and laughed over Gabrielle's theory, and then took to singing the new songs which in a short time would be the rage in the city.

John Fulton still wanted several years of being thirty. His face was thin and dark. His soft brown mustache saved it from an ascetic look. He had met with a misfortune some years before, which affected him greatly, and for a time dried up his ambition. He had

prevailed on his father to give him enough money to start a little business in partnership with another young man. Soon after they opened their store, the trade began to shift from Grand Street to a district farther uptown, and in less than two years John Fulton had lost almost all of his invested capital.

After this failure he applied for and obtained the position of letter-carrier, and now every morning he started out with that numerous band in gray, which brings tidings of joy or sorrow to the million and a half of people who live between the Battery and the Harlem River.

He was an ideal letter-carrier. His early failure in business, though it discouraged him for a while, ended by making him more gentle, kind, and sympathetic. If he had entertained any idea of getting married, there were a dozen girls on the East Side who would have been willing to take him for "better or worse." His gentleness and a faculty he possessed of making bright and happy remarks to those he met as he went from house to house was the secret of his popularity.

"Ah, Mamie," he would say to the young girl who had just tripped down five flights of uncarpeted stairs in a big, dreary, badly kept tenement, "this thing of getting love-letters won't do!" And then, as he handed her the letter, he would add, "I suppose there is no chance for a poor fellow like me?" Thus it happened that many an unsuspected benediction fell upon him. The girls living in his district said, "Ain't he nice?"

and the old women declared that "he was a credit to his mother."

The two young people had not been singing very long together when Mr. Crystal, attracted by the sound of their voices, entered the room. He was now a man turned fifty years, with a liberal sprinkling of gray through his hair and long beard.

"I thought you would be around to-night, Jack, looking for revenge on account of the way I swept your men off the board last Thursday evening." Then turning to his daughter, Mr. Crystal continued, "Get the chess ready, Gay."

Gabrielle sighed wearily as she went to do her father's bidding.

When the table had been fixed for the game, the two men sat down and were soon busy at play. The girls took seats in the corner of the room, and Agnes read softly from a book, while Gabrielle knitted and occasionally made comments on what was read. The book that Agnes was reading was that pretty story which tells how Colette's novena was answered in such a peculiar manner.

"Perhaps if I were to imitate Colette, and to drop something on top of Jack's head, it might be productive of good results," said Gabrielle, giving her needle a rest.

"Sometimes a sudden shock does make a great change in one," answered Agnes, looking up from the book with a smile.

"Yes," Gabrielle said, "I have read of deaf people

getting back their hearing and of insane people recovering their reason on account of an unexpected shock."

"But Jack is neither deaf nor insane."

"No, but he is blind though, or else he would see that I am no longer a child."

"How would you propose to administer the shock?"

"I don't know, unless I would take the onyx clock on the mantel and drop it on his head as he passes out of the front door."

Mr. Crystal interrupted this interesting conversation by asking his eldest daughter to get him the box of cigars.

Gabrielle put down her knitting and went eagerly to do as she was requested. The thought which flashed through her mind at the moment was, whether her sister's prayers would begin so soon to have an effect on John Fulton; whether he would give any indication of the realization of the fact that she had arrived at woman's estate.

She took the cigars from off the mantel with a trembling hand, and coming over to the table, handed the open box to the young man. She watched him anxiously as she did so. For the first few moments he bit his mustache and intently studied the chess-board, but did not notice her. When he had made his move he looked up, and seeing Gabrielle proffering the box, he exclaimed, "Excuse me!" and then added abstractedly, as his eyes returned to the board, "You are a good little girl, Gay; I don't know what we would do without you." Gabrielle made no answer. She handed

the box to her father, and after he had helped himself she laid it back on the mantel. She was crushed.

It was the same old story. She would always be a "good *little* girl" in his eyes.

"It's a pity that I am not six feet high," she said angrily to her sister, as she threw herself into the chair ; "then at least he would have to drop the *little*."

"Don't get discouraged," Agnes remarked soothingly ; "we have not been praying long enough."

"Oh, I cannot pray any longer ; I know he will never change," Gabrielle answered bitterly, as she took up her knitting and strove to conquer the solitary tear of disappointment which was struggling to free itself and roll down her cheek.

"Do try to be a little patient, Gay. You don't expect a miracle, do you ?"

"I don't want a miracle," Gabrielle answered, tossing the knitting into her lap ; "I only want him not to be so stupid, and to find out that I am no longer a child. That isn't much, is it ?"

"No ; considered in one way it isn't much, but, then, is there anything in the wide world which you desire more at present ? Answer me truly now."

Gabrielle made no reply.

"Considering your request from that standpoint, the younger sister continued with her reasoning, "it is quite a big favor you ask. So cheer up now, and don't bring on a fit of the blues, which, you know, usually lasts three days, and ends in a sick headache."

Gabrielle remained silently looking down at the

floor, not being able to find any answer to her sister's logic.

The game of chess continued for another hour, until the striking of ten o'clock warned the players that it was time to end their play.

As John Fulton, about to take his leave, reached the door, he paused for a moment on the threshold, and turning to Agnes Crystal, said, with a smile, "I think that Gay is growing. She is becoming quite a young woman." Then he bade them all good-night and went down the stairs, humming one of the airs that Gabrielle had played that evening.

Agnes raised her hand to the gas fixture and turned out the gas. As she did so she said to Gabrielle, "It looks as if our prayers were beginning to have some effect." And both girls giggled in the dark.

CHAPTER V.

"Get thee to a nunnery, go."

THE next morning's mail brought a letter to Agnes, and after reading it she showed it to Gabrielle. It was signed "Clara Harkins," and the writer asked Agnes to meet her at Gabrielle's office in the afternoon and be ready to go driving.

Clara Harkins was the only daughter of Gabrielle's employer, and having, like Agnes, made up her mind to enter a convent, a close friendship had sprung up between the two girls. It was a custom with Agnes to drop in often to see Gabrielle, and sometimes to help her with her work. Clara Harkins came to the office occasionally to see her father, and in this way met Agnes Crystal. Having the same end in common in life, they naturally grew fond of each other.

It was a high, shaft-like building overlooking Union Square in which Gabrielle worked. She had a cosy little office for herself, wherein she did typewriting and other work for Mr. Harkins. When she was not busy she watched the endless panorama of living beings on Broadway, or if it was summer, rested her eyes on the green trees and beds of bright flowers in the park.

Early in the afternoon Agnes arrived at Gabrielle's office, and a little later Clara Harkins drove up to the

door, and entered the elevator which carried passengers up thirteen floors. Clara was taller than either Gabrielle or Agnes. What one noticed about her was rather her dignity than her beauty. She walked erect, and her head was well poised on a long, shapely neck.

She greeted her father in his office, and after a few moments' conversation with him, came into the smaller office, where the girls were awaiting her. Her eyes brightened with a pleased expression as she entered, making quite a contrast to the worried look on her face while she was talking to her father.

"Perhaps it's selfish of me to take Agnes away from you, Gay," she said, after they were chatting awhile, "you both look so comfortable sitting here together."

"I have no objections to being relieved of her company," Gabrielle answered, giving her typewriting machine a toss back, so as to get ready for a new line. "She is taking up my employer's time, and, as far as I can see, no good is coming of it."

"I think we need have no scruples now about going, after such a plain declaration," Agnes said, rising from her seat and moving toward the door.

They left Gabrielle to continue her typewriting, and entered the carriage which was waiting for them. Clara instructed the coachman to drive up Fifth Avenue.

The carriage swung along the side of the park, and leaving Broadway, with its crush of people, was soon on its way uptown.

"I wanted badly to have a chat with you," Clara said as the carriage left the rough stone pavement of the

side street and rolled pleasantly over the asphalt of the avenue. "I have had a most miserable week of it."

"I am sorry to hear you say that," Agnes replied, turning toward her companion with an anxious movement. "What is the matter ; any new trouble ?"

"No ; the old one," she answered wearily. "My brothers went out early last evening, and I thought it a good chance to have a talk with my father and mother, and see if I could not persuade them to give me their consent to become a nun."

"How did they take it ?" Agnes asked.

"Frightfully ! Father stormed, and declared that he would rather see me dead than in a convent. Mother cried and said that I had no love for her, else I would not be so anxious to abandon her now that she is advanced in life. I fought it out as well as I could, using all the arguments I knew, but it was no use. They simply will not hear of it."

"Isn't it strange," said Agnes, her face showing astonishment, "that they oppose your entering a religious life ? Now, my father and mother will feel very lonesome when I leave them, but they would not for an instant think of preventing my going."

"Fortunately for you, Agnes," Clara replied, letting her head fall back despondingly against the soft cushion, "your father and mother are religious people, and are actuated by motives different from the ones which actuate my parents. My father, though he was baptized a Catholic, never goes to any church ; and my mother has always had the strangest religious ideas im-

aginable. My brothers follow my father, and, of course, I cannot expect any sympathy from them."

"What a pity your parents won't give you your freedom in the matter!" said Agnes sadly.

"Yes, it is a great pity," Clara answered.

"There is nothing to do but to have patience and to pray."

Clara nodded. "Of course I could go against their wishes, but I don't want to do that, at least until I am driven to it. I had a letter from one of the sisters of the convent the other day, and she counsels me to be patient and wait awhile, and see if I cannot win my father's and mother's consent."

"That is the best course to follow, I believe," Agnes assented; "perhaps some unexpected change may come over them."

"I hardly think so."

"Did you tell them that if you remained in the world and married you might make an unhappy marriage and be miserable all your life?"

"Yes," Clara answered; "I have told them that many times, but it has no effect upon them. Mamma says that if I married and the marriage was a failure, I could come back and live with her; whereas if I enter a convent I am lost forever."

"You should have answered your mother that if you became a nun you would be taking a step by which you would be *saved* forever."

A faint smile played about Clara's lips for a moment.

"Well, there is one consolation," Agnes continued

after a pause, "you will be well schooled in the virtue of patience before the time you reach the convent door. That will be a great advantage. In making my spiritual reading a few days ago, I came upon a passage which spoke of the great necessity of patience in one intending to become a religious."

"Yes, this cross of mine brings that consolation. No doubt, I will be a better nun for this experience—that is, if I ever have the happiness of becoming one," she added doubtfully and wearily.

Agnes, noticing her despondency, exclaimed, "Oh, that is a sure thing to my mind! Our Lord is only allowing you to be tried now; He has great things in store for you. I shouldn't wonder if He intends you for a Mother Superior, and that is why you are being fire-tried."

Clara smiled, saying with a shake of her head, "I don't want to be a Mother Superior; just an ordinary work-a-day nun will do very nicely."

Agnes laughed at a recollection.

"That reminds me that I said the same thing not long ago to a priest who had told me that I would one day be at the head of a convent. I assured him that I did not aspire so high. 'Not at present,' he said, 'but when you are a nun about six months you will have a great struggle to keep out of your mind the thought of how much better it would be for the convent if the Mother Superior would only take a long vacation and turn things over to you.'"

The carriage had rolled rapidly along the avenue, and they were now in sight of the Cathedral's tall marble

towers standing out gracefully against the soft blue summer sky.

"Suppose we stop at the Cathedral and make a little visit to the Blessed Sacrament," Clara proposed.

This was a daily practice with Agnes, and she gladly assented. The driver was instructed to draw up in front of the church. As the girls passed in, there were several little groups of people, evidently not Catholics, standing and looking about with a mixture of curiosity and admiration. Farther down, a few people were scattered about kneeling in prayer. At the side of the church a priest was baptizing a baby, which was crying lustily. The two girls crossed in front of the high altar, and made their way to a side chapel, in which a light was burning. They knelt there for a quarter of an hour in silent prayer for the same intention—that Clara Harkins's day of tribulation would be shortened. When they returned to the carriage Clara was in a happier state of mind and a livelier humor. Praying had evidently renewed her hope and courage.

"I am so glad you came with me, Agnes," she said, "and that we made that visit; I feel so much better for it. Sometimes I am so wretched that I am tempted to give up altogether my idea of entering the convent."

"Oh, you must never think of doing that!" Agnes exclaimed with some feeling. "Those also serve, you know, who only stand and wait."

"Yes, that is my great consolation. I thought of having those words printed on a card and then hanging them on the wall over my bed, so that every morning

they would catch my eye. It's generally in the morning that I feel most miserable."

"That's always the case with those who are in trouble. The morning unravels the knit-up sleeve of care."

Before Agnes had finished speaking a man on a spirited horse came riding down the avenue, and his eye, roving over the long line of passing carriages, caught sight of Clara Harkins. He lifted his hat and bowed profoundly as he passed along.

"That is a gentleman by the name of Mr. Parker. He is a friend of my father's," Clara explained.

"Yes," answered Agnes; "I have seen him talking to your father several times when I visited Gay."

"That's the same man. My father has the greatest respect for him. He is said to be worth over five million dollars."

Agnes raised her eyebrows with astonishment.

"He is a widower, too, Gay tells me." Agnes explained that Gabrielle had noticed crepe on his hat, and had not rested until she learned that he was alone in the world.

"Yes, he is a widower," Clara answered; "and for that reason my parents are much interested in him. One day, about a month ago, he took dinner with us and remained a good part of the evening. After he was gone my father turned to my mother and said, 'Wouldn't Mr. Parker make a splendid husband for Clara?' My mother folded her hands in her lap and answered, with evident satisfaction, 'I could hope for

nothing better.' 'Clara will continue losing time in impracticable dreaming about convents,' my father continued, 'and in the meantime some shrewder girl will set her cap for Mr. Parker and his five millions, and live ever afterward in a land flowing with milk and honey.' "

"They surely wouldn't expect you to marry him simply for his riches!" interrupted Agnes, in a tone indicating horror.

"I really don't know what they expect. I made an excuse to leave the room, and let them settle it between themselves."

The carriage had turned into Central Park, and the fresh air, blowing along the avenues lined with trees, was so delicious, that they drove far into the Park before Clara thought of looking at her watch to see what time it was. When she did so, she was surprised to find that it was late, and she hastily gave orders to the coachman to turn back, as she had promised to take her father home.

"We have had such a pleasant afternoon, Gay," Clara exclaimed, as she entered the office where Gabrielle was hard at work. "I am so sorry you were not with us!"

Gabrielle lifted her fingers from the typewriting machine and answered, "So I heard."

"So you heard!" Clara repeated in surprise, with questioning eyes.

"Yes; Mr. Parker was here a half hour ago, and I heard him tell your father that he had met you, and

that he had never before seen you looking so happy and so lovely."

Mr. Parker, it will be remembered, met the girls just after they had finished their prayers in the Cathedral, and Clara felt at that moment happier than she had for a long time. She had gone through a great deal of worry for more than a year, and from being a girl of a naturally happy disposition, she had become morose and sad, and the effect of the long strain which had been put upon her showed in her countenance.

"Mr. Parker is certainly complimentary," Clara answered.

"Yes ; and he is a widower, too." Gabrielle turned her head to one side and there was a smile in her eyes.

"You smile, Gay, when you mention the fact that Mr. Parker is a widower. That is rather a sad fact."

"I cannot help smiling," said Gabrielle, "when I think of Mr. Parker's enthusiasm. Positively he seemed to grow ten years younger, Miss Harkins, at the thought of you."

Mr. Harkins tapped a bell summoning Gabrielle.

"I wonder," said Clara, after a moment's reflection, turning to Agnes, "if Mr. Parker could be so foolish as to think anything of me. I know that if he does, and speaks to my father and mother, that they will favor him. And that will be a new misery for me."

Before Agnes could reply Gabrielle threw open the door, and noticing the sad expression on Clara's face

said, "I hope, Miss Harkins, that you did not take my words seriously. I only meant them in pure fun."

Clara smiled and tried to make little of the matter, but Agnes and Gabrielle understood that Mr. Parker was beginning to loom up as another possible affliction.

CHAPTER VI.

"While working sadly by my window I pricked my finger, and the white flower that I was embroidering became a red flower."

THE days slipped by, and John Fulton's eyes gave no more signs of opening. In several ways he had unconsciously offended Gabrielle by his manner.

"I have rights the same as other people," she angrily asserted one day to Agnes, "and Jack must learn to respect them. I don't care whether he thinks anything of me or not, but I do insist *very* much that he treat me as a lady."

"Oh!" exclaimed Agnes, to whom her sister's words seemed harsh, "you don't mean to say that Jack could do anything ungentlemanly?"

"I didn't say that," Gabrielle answered rather coldly.

"You spoke of him not treating you as a lady."

"Yes, I did, but I did not mean by that to imply that he was not a gentleman. I simply meant that I have the rights of a woman, and should be addressed as one, and not as a child."

Agnes apologized for not understanding.

About the middle of August Gabrielle's vacation of three weeks began, and Mrs. Crystal decided on going

out of the city for a rest during the time that her daughter was free.

Every morning for a week the whole family read and re-read the many advertisements of hotels and farm-houses which filled the New York papers. They discussed the benefit of sea-bathing as compared with the good to be derived from the air of the mountains. The reading of the numerous advertisements brought back to their minds happy recollections of former experiences during summer vacations, and made the week of anticipation almost as pleasant as the realization.

After much thought and talk they decided that the breeze from the East River gave them enough sea-air, and that it would be more beneficial to try life on a farm in the Catskill Mountains.

When John Fulton heard the decision, he made up his mind to apply for a vacation and go with them.

The evening before their departure the young man came to announce that he had received a leave of absence, and would be glad to accompany them. On inquiring for the girls, Mrs. Crystal told him that they were sitting down in the yard, trimming straw hats to wear while in the country. He went downstairs and found them both seated at a table in a pretty little arbor covered with a fragrant honeysuckle vine.

Mrs. Crystal's garden was the wonder of the neighborhood, and a constant delight to all those who could see it from their back windows. A large magnolia-tree which grew near the back fence blossomed gloriously every summer and threw a welcome shade during

the hot afternoons. High bushes grew along the fence, and in the middle of the yard a huge bed of many-colored flowers, encircled by a grass-plot, completed this refreshing oasis in a desert of outhouses, fire-escapes, clothes-poles, clothes-lines, and hanging linen. Mrs. Crystal attended very faithfully to her flowers, especially to the honeysuckle vine, for was it not under one she was standing when her husband came up the road to claim her for his bride?

As soon as John Fulton entered the vine-covered arbor, Gabrielle laid down the hat she was trimming, and drew up a chair for him at the table where she and Agnes were sitting.

"Agnes and I," she remarked, as she sat down again and took up her needle, "were just talking about life on a farm. We spent one summer at a farm-house, and I believe it was about the most enjoyable vacation we ever had."

"Suppose you go on with the conversation," he replied, as he sent the smoke from a freshly lighted cigar to the top of the arbor, to mingle with the heavy aroma of the honeysuckle. "If your description pleases me, Gay, perhaps I may buy a farm, turn farmer, and engage you and Agnes as dairymaids. I am sure I could make a living raising geese and chickens, and selling them to Mr. Cohen, the butcher in Orchard Street, who kills fowl in the *kosher* way."

His proposition gave great pleasure to Gabrielle, but she would have been still more delighted if he had said that he might buy a farm and make her ~~the~~ dairymaid,

suppressing all mention of her sister. Such a wish she did not feel was selfish, because Agnes thought of Jack only as an old friend, while she really loved him.

At John Fulton's solicitation Gabrielle described to him the fun which they had had during the vacation they spent on the farm. She told of how she had tried horseback-riding on an old white horse which was waiting for the kind hand of death to lead him to the place whither good horses go, of how she had mastered the art of making butter, and had driven a mowing-machine, and cut down an acre of hay. Then she had milked cows, fed chickens, and had seen their little heads chopped off. "Oh, it was all perfectly delightful!" she exclaimed, as she bit a piece of thread from the spool, "except one thing."

"What was that?" he inquired, noticing how her voice had changed and how sad her face looked.

"The only thing that jarred on me and put me out of conceit a little with a farmer's life, was being a witness one day of the slaughter of a poor lamb. Oh, it was *too* cruel! I saw the farmer snatch it up from among the others. I heard its painful bleating. It seems to me now that the cruelty of the thing must have fascinated me. I watched the old hardened executioner until he had fairly laid his big shining knife on the poor little thing's throat, and after that I remembered no more, except that I was so ill that evening that I could not eat my supper."

Agnes, who had been busy during her sister's recital, ripping out some wrong stitches, now interrupted her.

saying with a laugh, "I remember the night well, Gay. You nearly frightened me to death, calling out in your sleep, 'The knife, the knife; oh! oh! oh!'"

After John Fulton and Agnes had enjoyed a laugh at Gabrielle's expense, she continued, "I don't mind eating a chicken which I have seen killed, but it's really inhuman to butcher a dear little lamb. You may be certain that when they served roast lamb for dinner a few days afterward that I did not eat any meat at that meal."

"But when you came back to the city," John Fulton urged, "you surely became reconciled again to eating roast lamb."

"Not at all," she quickly replied. "No one need ever place a leg of roast lamb before me at table, because just as sure as I would put a piece of it into my mouth, I would hear the sorrowful bleating of that poor creature I saw slaughtered; and excuse me from being haunted by the cries of the dying, even if they are only lambs."

"You wouldn't mind, though, Gay," said he, urging her still further, "if a dish of lamb stew was placed before you?"

"Oh, no; lamb stew is different"—she was very fond of the lamb stew her mother made. "You could not possibly connect lamb stew with a dying lamb."

Agnes took a hand in the questioning.

"How is it, Gay," she asked, "that you are so afraid of being haunted by the ghosts of dead lambs that you won't eat roast lamb; while, on the other hand, you never seem to be able to get enough of roast chicken?"

"Oh, chickens haven't ghosts," Gabrielle responded disdainfully, with a shake of her head.

But Agnes was not to be put off so easily.

"I don't see how you make that out. If there are lamb-ghosts, there must be chicken-ghosts."

"Well, suppose there are," Gabrielle replied a little impatiently and contemptuously; "who would be afraid of a little chicken-ghost?"

There was a loud laugh, and Mrs. Crystal, sitting at the open window of her room, said to her husband, "Gay must be letting herself loose again."

"You are a woman, Gay," John Fulton remarked, after his laughing fit was over, "with a woman's logic."

Just then a cat on the back fence began moaning like a child in pain, making the two girls nervous. John Fulton rose to throw a stone at it, and when rising laid on the table beside Gabrielle his open knife, with which he had been cutting the end off a new cigar. A moment after he had sent the cat along the fences to annoy people living farther down the street, he heard a cry from the arbor, and hastening back, found Gabrielle pale and frightened. She had not noticed the open knife, and accidentally struck her hand against it. The blood flowed freely from a cut in the middle of her hand.

"Come over here, Gay," John Fulton said, leading her to a small pump near the fence. The cold water which she drank and allowed to run on her wounded hand soon revived her. They returned to the arbor, and the young man taking out a sheet of court-plaster

from his pocketbook, cut off a thin strip and covered the wound. Then for a moment he held the poor hand with the gash showing through the plaster, and raising it to his lips kissed it, as he would have kissed the hand of a child. When she looked up at him and saw the great tenderness in his eyes, she was not sorry that the accident had happened.

After the little party in the arbor had broken up, and Gabrielle was standing before the long mirror in the parlor admiring her new hat, the sight of the injured hand sent a thrill of joy through her. She thought of the look in *his* eyes. She reasoned on his words, "You are a *woman*, Gay, with a woman's logic." "He certainly did not mean that as a compliment," she argued with herself, as she tilted the hat from side to side on her head; "but, anyhow, the last time we met he said I was growing, and to-night he called me a woman."

She smiled in the glass as she gave a final touch to the hat, but whether it was because of the pleasure she took in the new hat or for other reasons, it is hard to say. One would have to be a psychologist to know some things,

CHAPTER VII.

*"Oh, would I were dead now,
Or up in my bed now,
To cover my head now,
And have a good cry."*

THE next morning Mrs. Crystal, her two daughters, and John Fulton sat in the 10.30 train as it moved slowly out of the Grand Central Station. The air within the enclosure was heavy and wet, and the smoke from the puffing engines, like a low cloud, brushed the tops of the cars. The run through the long, unpleasant tunnel was made quickly enough, and when the train reached the Hudson River the late sun had flooded the Palisades on the New Jersey shore.

"How much did you say the tickets cost, Jack?" Gabrielle inquired.

"Three dollars and a half, each."

"Dear me! No, dear tickets, I mean. I think I'll have to have a drink of ice-water after that."

"Do sit down, Gay!" Mrs. Crystal exclaimed. "You jump around worse than—"

"Worse than a hen on a hot griddle, mamma. Don't be ashamed to complete the sentence. That's one of papa's expressions, Jack. He brought it over from the 'County Mayo, long, long ago.' Sometimes he varies

it and calls me a *petit crapaud*, which are the only two French words he carried home from Canada, where he made love to mamma."

Mrs. Crystal smiled at the recollection, and Gabrielle took advantage of her good humor to jump up and go for a drink.

"Three dollars and a half each, did you say, Jack? Well, I'll drink all I can, so as to get my money's worth."

The train rattled along rapidly, swinging from side to side with its speed. The wide river lay quiet in the sunshine.

A crowded excursion boat cut through the calm water, and one or two shining yachts passed by, carrying their millionaire owners from their country residences to Wall Street. Village after village was left behind, and after a few stops the train arrived at Rhine-cliff, where there is a ferry connecting with trains on the opposite shore of the river.

The ride up the mountains did not seem long to girls who had never been in the midst of mountains before, and in a seemingly short time the puffing train reached a level track and wheeled them into the little station.

The farmer at whose house they were to stop met them with a three-seated mountain wagon, drawn by a pair of rusty-looking horses. The two girls sat together on the back seat, speculating as to what kind of a home they were going to have during the next few weeks. Whatever doubts they may have had were dispelled

when the old farmer drew up his horses, and with evident pride pointed out his house to the new boarders.

It was a long, low white cottage, built on the side of the mountain, about half a mile distant from the upper end of the village. The wide porch running around it was well shaded by vines. Rose-bushes grew near the entrance at either side. The gravel walk leading up to the door was fringed with shining pink conch-shells. In the centre of the lawn, which ran down to the road, stood two huge trunks of trees filled with flowering plants. Back of the house, sloping upward toward the mountains, extended a well-cultivated and well-stocked farm of about sixty acres.

"I think this will be a delightful place," Gabrielle whispered to John Fulton. "I believe we shall have as good a time as we had on that farm I was telling you about last night."

The old farmer went to relieve Agnes of some of the bundles which filled her arms.

"Do you keep lambs on your farm, or rather do you slaughter them?" she asked, as he relieved her of a few of her bundles.

John Fulton laughed, and Gabrielle pretended not to hear.

"No, miss," the old man answered with a chuckle, "we don't keep no lambs here to kill. The only lambs we farmers in this township slaughter be the ones that come to us as boarders."

The little party were soon at home amid their new surroundings. For the first few days they did nothing

else but rest and nourish themselves with the pure air of the mountains, so refreshing to those who live in that section of New York City which is bounded by the Bowery, Grand, and Houston streets.

Toward evening of the third day after their arrival an incident occurred which brought great sorrow and ultimately great misery to Gabrielle Crystal. She had been lazily rocking herself in the corner of a room looking out on the porch, and was beginning to doze, when she was awakened by the sound of voices. John Fulton and a young lady, who was the niece of the old farmer, met on the porch near the open window where Gabrielle was sitting. She could not see them, but as everything was quiet about the house, she plainly heard what they said. She had no intention of eavesdropping, and in fact was about to put her head out of the window and make known her presence, when she heard the young lady mention her name. One remark led to another, till finally the farmer's niece made so bold as to speak of Gabrielle as the future wife of the young man. John Fulton laughed at her words, and answered that there was not the slightest fear that anything like that would ever come to pass. Then Gabrielle rose from her chair, mechanically gathering up her knitting which had fallen to the floor, and going to her room, flung herself upon her bed in an agony of tears. Hope died in her heart. If she could have taken the evening train to New York City, she would have done so ; but to follow such a course would be to reveal her secret. The first agony of her grief over, her pride and anger gave her strength.

She rose from the bed and bathed her eyes and smoothed her disordered hair. Supper found her at her place, and even her sister Agnes did not notice any change in her. Once or twice afterward in the solitude of her own room her spirit failed her, and she thought to go to her mother and ask permission to return to the city ; but her better judgment prevailed, and she kept her trouble hid from every one.

They had been almost a week at the farm-house when John Fulton said one morning, " I think we have been imitating Rip Van Winkle long enough ; suppose now we try to climb the mountain."

He was sitting on the west side of the porch, looking up at the mountains. Gabrielle and Agnes were knocking croquet balls indiscriminately about the lawn—every farm-house that accommodates boarders has a croquet set.

" Let us climb to the top of that mountain just opposite," Agnes answered, as she held one foot on a ball and with a vicious stroke sent another cutting through the grass. " There is a road back of the house which leads up to it. Only yesterday I saw a number of people going that way."

The proposition was readily adopted. They provided themselves with imitation alpenstocks, which were for sale in the village, and began their journey, Mrs. Crystal promising to watch them as they ascended the mountain.

The road commenced in a narrow lane or cow-path. Higher up it led them through a stretch of sloping

green field, in which a number of white, black, and mottled cows were grazing. A wily young farmer's lad had built a shed over a well near the path, in which he kept fresh, cool milk to sell to mountain-climbers, at five cents a glass. At the end of the field the mountain proper began.

"I used to think," Gabrielle remarked, "that mountain-climbing was difficult and tiring. I find it, on the contrary, very easy and not the least fatiguing."

At the beginning of the road leading up the mountain the interlacing branches of the trees made a pleasant shade. A few moments after Gabrielle had delivered herself of these sentiments the shade of the trees ended, the road became steep and rocky, and the hot sun beat down mercilessly.

This state of things lasted about half an hour, and when at length they reached the shade of a few high bushes, Gabrielle threw herself on the ground exhausted, and convinced that mountain-climbing was the hardest and roughest kind of work. From where they were resting in the shade, a white sign-post was visible farther up the mountain.

"Let us reach that spot," Agnes said, "and then we can feel satisfied that our climb has not been a total failure."

Once more they began their journey, and at last came in sight of the white sign-post, on which was printed in black figures, "11 miles to the top of the mountain."

The low growl of a dog startled them as they were

reading in astonishment the great number of miles that they would yet have to climb before reaching the top. Turning around to look in the direction whence the noise came, they saw a young man reclining on a bench and smoking a huge brierwood pipe. A Newfoundland dog lay crouching at his feet. The sound of voices and the growling of the dog aroused the occupant of the bench. He raised his head lazily to see who might be passing, and when he saw a pretty pair of black eyes staring at him in wonder, he rose more quickly from his resting-place, stepping heavily on the foot of the poor brute at his side. The next moment he exclaimed, "Hello, Fulton! how did you get up here?"

John Fulton uttered a cry of surprise as he came over to take the outstretched hand of the young man, saying at the same time, "This looks like a foolish way for a letter-carrier to be resting his tired feet, doesn't it?"

After they had exchanged greetings, the stranger was introduced to the two young ladies as Mr. Bryce.

"You are making for the top of the mountain, I suppose?" said the young man with the dog, which had just ceased howling, and was sniffing in a dissatisfied manner the new-comers who had been the indirect cause of his suffering.

"That was our intention at the time we started," John Fulton replied, "but we have gotten bravely over it. Farther down the mountain, while we were resting, we began rehearsing all we remembered of our geography, and the nearest we could get to the defini-

tion of a mountain was, that it is 'a body of land which begins and never ends.' "

"It is a good bit of a climb on a warm day like this," responded the owner of the dog, hastily puffing at his pipe to renew the life of the fire in it; "but as you are so near the top now, you ought not to give up until you have reached it."

Gabrielle, who had in the meantime been talking "baby talk" to the poor dog and feeding him with crackers, broke into the conversation, saying, "I think we have had about all the climbing we can possibly stand to-day. 'Eleven miles to the top,' as the guide-post declares, is a trifle disheartening."

"Eleven miles to the top!" exclaimed the young man, who had quietly been watching with interest Gabrielle's friendliness to his dog; "surely the guide-post doesn't say that."

"Yes, it does," Gabrielle assured him; "if you look at it you will see for yourself."

They repaired to the spot where the sign was, and to his surprise the young man read, "11 miles to the top of the mountain." In a moment he understood the mistake. "'By their deeds ye may know them.' That is the work of the summer boarder. The sign should read, '1 mile to the top of the mountain.' If you examine more closely you can distinguish a difference in coloring between the first figure and the second. Somebody printed the extra figure on the sign, for a joke."

The discovery consoled the weary mountaineers. They were glad to know that they had so nearly reached the

summit. As soon, then, as Mr. Bryce offered to act as guide the rest of the way, Gabrielle accepted his offer in the name of the others. She was anxious to climb to the top, and besides she did not want to part company with the dog, to which she had become greatly attached.

So it came to pass that when the four young people continued their journey, Horace Bryce and Gabrielle, with the dog at her side, looking for more crackers, led the way, while Agnes and John Fulton brought up the rear.

"My dog seems to have taken a great liking to you," Horace Bryce remarked, beginning the conversation.

"Yes," answered Gabrielle, taking from her hand-bag another cracker; "I have given him of my sympathy and crackers, and he is returning the kindness in dog-love and caresses."

"It is an old proverb, 'Who loves me will love my dog also,' " he rejoined, puffing again viciously at his pipe; "but in my case it looks as if the dog came first. I'm mighty glad I took you along, Tiger," he continued, addressing the now happy dog; "if it were not for you, I am afraid Miss Crystal would not have been so anxious to have me as guide."

"Oh, yes, I would," Gabrielle protested, trying to feed the dog and talk to her companion at the same time. "It was more than kind of you to give up your rest on that old bench, where you seemed to be so comfortable, to prove to us weary travellers that a moun-

tain has a top. So please don't think I do not appreciate your generosity."

"Perhaps if I show you the same kindness you have shown to my dog you will think more of me," he rejoined.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"I mean if I can bring you where you can eat and refresh yourself; where you can feed on juicy mountain berries and drink of a mountain spring, that then, perhaps, when the supper-bell tolls the knell of parting day, you will have cause to remember not only a dog, but also its owner."

Gabrielle smiled and exclaimed, "Oh, if you do that I shall be eternally obliged to you. Between the dry crackers I have been munching on my way up the mountain and the heat and the dust, I am suffering dreadfully from thirst."

"I'm glad to be able, then, to refresh you for your kindness to my dog," he replied. "By following that narrow path just above us, leading off the main road to the right, we shall come to a delicious spring of icy water and an abundance of large, ripe berries."

A little more climbing and they reached the side road on which the young man entered, parting the overhanging branches of bushes, while the rest followed him in Indian file. A short walk brought them to a clear spot, which was well shaded. It was a grassy amphitheatre, protected from the hot sun by tall trees, and enclosed by bushes weighed down with berries. From a rock water flowed in a thin, crystal stream.

Horace Bryce took out of his pocket a small rubber cup, and filling it, gave the tired climbers a drink. Then the girls ate the berries.

"We have been blest in finding so good a friend," Gabrielle said, addressing Horace Bryce, her pretty lips stained a deeper red from the berries. "Our trip would have been only a reminiscence of heat and dust had we not met you. Now it will be a delightful recollection. Every time I hear the street-vender coming through Eldridge Street shouting, 'Heah y'are, nice berries, givin' 'em away for ten cents a box!' I'll remember your kindness, Mr. Bryce."

"'Out of the abundance of the mouth the heart speaketh,' " he said, with a smile.

"Oh!" exclaimed Gabrielle, pouting her berry-stained lips as she caught the meaning of his words, "that's not fair to twist Scripture that way and put me on a level with your dog. I would have felt grateful even if you had not fed me and given me drink."

He blushed a little at her words and betrayed some embarrassment. "I humbly apologize. I did not mean to put it so brutally as that. I could not resist the chance to try to make a little joke, but I see I have failed miserably."

Gabrielle noticed with surprise the effect of her words upon him, and immediately felt sorry for what she had said. This slight encounter and his apology made them still more friendly.

The four young people gathered themselves together once more, and after a short walk reached the top. An

accommodating railroad had built an observatory out of logs on the summit of the mountain, for the use of the visitors who had paid ten cents a mile to reach the mountains on its cars. The tall wooden observatory, covered as it was with names, initials, and dates, resembled very much Cleopatra's needle which stands so lonesome-looking in Central Park. The mountain winds had bleached the logs, so that the fibres of the wood were like threads of gray silk. Being assured that the observatory was perfectly safe, the two girls managed to summon up enough courage to climb it, but more than once on their way up they repented of what they had done, as it swayed in the mountain winds like the masts of a ship in a heavy sea.

However, when they reached its top they were well rewarded for their daring by the beautiful panorama which stretched out before them. Tall mountains loomed up all around the long valley. Miles away several large mountain hotels, bathed in a blue mist, were plainly visible. A collection of white tombstones marked the country churchyard. Peace, like the sunshine, reigned everywhere. The cows grazed quietly in the pasture land below, and the village with its one road, along which a miniature-looking horse and wagon were jogging, seemed as silent and deserted as "Sweet Auburn."

"I wonder whether we can see our house from here?" said Gabrielle, letting her eyes roam over the wide territory.

She had hardly uttered the words when Agnes pulled

out a handkerchief from her pocket and began waving it violently, exclaiming at the same time, "There's mamma ! there's mamma !"

Far below them, Mrs. Crystal was standing on the porch of the farm-house, furiously waving a white towel. She had been waiting there for several hours to catch sight of her children.

This was a pleasant ending to a trip which would have been a failure had they not stumbled upon Horace Bryce. When they reached the foot of the mountain again, the sun had gone out of sight behind the hills, and the tinkling of a supper-bell in a neighboring hotel broke the silence which everywhere surrounded the mountain.

The two girls were profuse in their thanks to the young man who had contributed so much to their pleasure.

"I wish you would come to see us at our quiet little home," Gabrielle said, as she finished thanking him ; "it's a trifle dull sometimes."

"I shall be only too glad," he replied ; "I find my own hotel somewhat monotonous. If you don't mind, I'll drop over your way to-morrow morning. I always take a walk after breakfast."

Gabrielle assured him that they would be glad to welcome him. Then he raised his hat and went across the fields.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Are we to mark this day with a white or a black stone?"

THE following morning, shortly after breakfast was finished at the farm-house, Horace Bryce with his dog and pipe came sauntering along the road. Agnes Crystal and John Fulton were inspecting the poultry-yard, while Gabrielle was sitting under an elm-tree, with a yellow-covered novel lying unopened in her lap. She was the first one to see the young man as he came up to the house, and she greeted him very cordially. He lifted his hat in an easy way that was characteristic of him, at the same time saying, "I know I have not disturbed you in your reading, because when I arrived at the top of the hill I saw that the book was unopened, and that you were looking at the mountains and day-dreaming."

She drew up a rustic chair for him. The dog sniffed about a few moments, and then came and stretched himself at her feet.

"No; you did not interrupt me in my reading. The fact is, I have not yet opened the book. Jack bought it for me on the train, but I find it is so restful just to sit here and dream that I have not had any desire to read."

"That is precisely the way the mountains affected

me the first few days I was here, but during the last four days I have finished three novels, and all very queer ones they were. The first was a study in hypnotism, the second, what is called, I believe, a psychological novel, and the third one was about a man who lost his faith in religion in his early life and gained it again when he arrived at middle age. One never knows these days what he may stumble upon when he pays his fifty cents for a novel on a railroad train."

"Wouldn't it be a safer course, then, to act according to the old proverb, 'When a new book comes out, read an old one'?"

"Oh, certainly, if one is seeking to gather knowledge and improve one's mind. To stand by that advice would save much time and many disappointments; but I find the most pleasure in buying a new book about which I know nothing, and passing my own ignorant judgment upon it. I read only for pleasure, and I find the greatest pleasure fishing in new streams. The fun is more exciting."

"But suppose that you hook a great many fish in succession which are not fit to eat, doesn't it grow discouraging?"

"Not as discouraging as you would imagine, for every time you find a book is a failure, you have the joy of casting it into the fire and heaping maledictions on the author. Besides, you can take a sweet revenge on the man who wrote the book by advising others not to buy it. Mind you, I do not contend that my way brings much profit, if any, to the intellect; I only say

that I get pleasure out of it, and, as I remarked before, amusement is all I expect from books."

"Your way of acting, then, is altogether different from mine," said Gabrielle. "I never care to begin reading a book until some one else assures me that it is worth while reading. So, if you don't mind, I wish you would read this novel first, and let me know if it is interesting."

He protested that he did not wish to deprive her of it, but on her urging he accepted, because he foresaw that it would give him a chance to call again.

Almost from the moment that he had seen Gabrielle on the mountain he had been captivated by her. He found, too, that she improved on better acquaintance. She looked so pretty as she sat there under the elm-tree, dressed in white, with a band of pink ribbon about her throat. He was sure that never before had he seen such lustrous black eyes. Everything about her appealed to him. Even the myriads of little ruffles on her dress, rippling like grass in the tremulous summer air, struck him as peculiar to her.

Agnes Crystal and John Fulton, having finished talking "crops" to the old farmer, made their way over to the elm-tree.

"The mail train has just come whistling through the valley," John Fulton remarked, "and Agnes and I are going to the village to see if there are any letters for us. Do you two care to go?"

Gabrielle excused herself, saying that the walk up the mountain made sitting down a luxury, and Horace

Bryce said he left New York to get away from the mail. The letter-carriers therefore departed on the journey, leaving those enjoying the shade of the elm-tree to continue their *tête-à-tête*.

"Your sister does not resemble you very much in looks," Horace Bryce remarked, as he watched Agnes disappearing down the road.

"No," Gabrielle answered ; "in hair, eyes, and complexion we are totally different. Agnes looks like papa, and I resemble mamma."

"She seems to be of a quieter disposition than you," he continued.

"Do you mean by that that she is more reserved," Gabrielle asked, looking at his face quizzically ; "that she does not become familiar so quickly with acquaintances of a day?"

"Oh, no!" he protested a little nervously. "You jump at conclusions too fast. I have humility enough to make me see that I have been well received for my dog's sake. Isn't that so, Tiger?" The dog threw up his head and wagged his tail at the sound of his name. "I am appealing to you, Tiger, to decide if it is not true that I would not be sitting here this morning if I had gone up the mountain without you yesterday."

The dog lazily stretched out his forefeet, and his raised head fell forward as he resumed the position from which he had been disturbed.

"See his head bow down!" exclaimed Horace Bryce. "In dog language that means 'Yes.' Tiger is one of

the most truthful and candid dogs I ever knew," he added, with a little laugh.

"Oh, it was a mere accident that he bowed his head that time," said Gabrielle. "Watch me catechize him. Tiger, look me straight in the face." The animal did as he was bid, opening and shutting his mouth and smacking his lips as if to say, "More crackers." "Now, Tiger, you must tell the truth," she continued, leaning down and crossing one of his legs over the other. "That signifies that you cross your heart to prove the truth of what you say."

This little comedy greatly delighted the young man, and his fondness for Gabrielle increased every moment.

"On your word and honor, Tiger, as a dog, tell me if it is not true that your master would at this moment be sitting under this elm-tree, even if you had been down in the valley while he stood tiptoe on the misty mountain-top?"

"Tiger," whispered Horace Bryce, and the animal turned his head toward him.

"Tiger!" exclaimed Gabrielle, and back toward her went the dog's head.

"Here, Tiger," he coaxingly said, and the dog turned in his direction.

"Mind *me*, Tiger!" she commanded, stamping her foot in mock anger, and Tiger did as he was commanded.

Between the solicitations of the one and the commands of the other, the poor brute became confused, and his head turned nervously from side to side.

The young man had gained his point again, though at first Gabrielle did not understand the trick.

"You see," he remarked, with a smile, "Tiger says 'No.' When a man or a dog shakes his head from side to side, as Tiger did just now, that action signifies negation, and judging from the number of times Tiger shook his head, he must intend to say 'No' very emphatically."

"I suppose I ought to admit that I have been beaten," Gabrielle responded, when it dawned upon her how she had been outwitted; "but I don't acknowledge defeat at all. Dogs are not like men, they are more like women, who when they say 'No' frequently mean 'Yes.' I understand, Tiger," she continued, patting his shaggy head, "better than your master does the 'yesness' of your 'no.'"

The two friends of a day thus sat and chatted until the others arrived. After the letters were read and the morning papers glanced at, Horace Bryce, jumping up from his seat, said, "By the way, Jack, you have been here about a week and you have not as yet enjoyed a mountain drive. Now, I propose that we take the young ladies for a long drive to-morrow. There are pretty falls about a dozen miles from here that you all ought to see before going back to the city; besides, the drive is a cool and pleasant one. The way to enjoy it most is to start in the morning, take dinner at a hotel near the falls, rest a few hours, and return in the cool of the evening."

The two girls and John Fulton gladly accepted the invitation, and their visitor took his departure.

Before breakfast was over at the farm-house the next morning Horace Bryce came rattling along the road in a yellow-colored wagon. A heavy fall of rain during the night had settled the dust. Each blade of grass and tiny wild flower held its trembling drop of dew. The sun was fast dissipating the clouds which hung like silver drapery along the tops of the mountains. The air after the rain was cool and refreshing.

Gabrielle took her place in the wagon beside Horace Bryce, and they started on their journey.

The ride, as their friend had told them, was delightful. The green valley stretching away on both sides of the road, the high mountains flooded with sunlight, the ripening wheat, the fields white with barley or golden green with waving corn, the small flower-encircled cottages, the rushing mountain streams overflowing their banks because of the previous night's rain—all added to the interest and charm of the drive.

Most of the time, Gabrielle held the reins and Horace Bryce did the talking, pointing out the interesting objects on the road. Once they stopped at a wayside trough to water the horses, and Horace Bryce, as he jumped down from the wagon, turned to Gabrielle, and remarked with a smile, "I hardly like to stop, even for a moment. I wish we could go on, like Tennyson's brook, forever."

Gabrielle's eyes shone with pleasure, and she bowed her head as if to confirm his words. But she did not suspect then how serious were his thoughts. It was midday when they arrived at the hotel. After they had

dined they walked down the well-shaded country road which led to the falls.

Horace Bryce had put his camera into the wagon when starting, with the express intention of getting a picture of Gabrielle. The falls, though not very large, looked pretty as the mountain streams, swollen with rain, rushed over them.

"I won't consider that we have had a perfect day, Miss Crystal, unless you let me take a snap-shot of you," remarked Horace Bryce to Gabrielle, as he was adjusting the camera to the tripod. "You would look a perfect poem standing across there, where the water tumbles in a silver spray over that rough ledge of rock."

"Why, I shall be delighted to have my picture 'took!' Besides, I would much rather have the 'silver spray' falling on me than throw cold water on your desire." She fixed herself in front of the camera as if in readiness. "It doesn't shoot, does it?" she asked, comically placing one eye against the lens of the instrument.

"Yes, it does," he replied, stooping down and gathering the wild flowers that were growing at his feet; it shoots snap-shots. Some of them, too, are dangerous. They sometimes kill—friendship and love."

"How?" inquired Gabrielle.

He paused in his work of gathering the flowers to tell her.

"I have a friend," he said, "who some time ago invested in a camera. He was in love with a young lady, and one day he asked her to sit for a picture. She con-

sented. A few days afterwards he brought the photograph to her in great joy, satisfied that he was a past-master in the art of photography. She looked at it for a moment and then returned it, at the same time telling him that if he could not do any better work he ought to sell his camera and buy a bicycle. Her cutting sarcasm made him angry, and he up and told her that the picture was a perfect one."

" 'Do you mean to say that I have a mouth like that?' she screamed, as she pointed to the picture. 'If you think that, I don't ever want to see you again,' and she burst into tears and left him. It is three months now since the unfortunate accident happened, and the quarrel shows no sign as yet of healing."

"I hope," said Gabrielle pleadingly, "that there is no danger of us having a quarrel. If I imagined there was, I would not stand in front of this deadly machine for a moment."

He thought he detected a show of feeling in her words, and he was greatly pleased. He tied together with a string the wild flowers he had gathered and brought them to her. I want you to wear these as a remembrance of our trip." He blushed as he said the words, and then added hastily to relieve his embarrassment, "Besides, they will add to the picture."

Gabrielle looked very pretty standing against the rocks with the water dashing from above, and the spray, bright in the sunlight, falling all around her. Horace Bryce's hand trembled as he pressed the button on the side of the camera, lest he might make a failure. John

Fulton and Agnes Crystal had wandered away, following the course of the running stream. They came back as Horace Bryce was finishing, and together with Gabrielle made a group for the amateur photographer.

It was a very happy party of young people that saw the moon rising directly in front of them as they bowled over the mountain road on their way home.

Their laughter and song brought many a farmer's child out of the house, to watch them as they went by. The moonlight fell softly on the mountains, which seemed to grow smaller, and the streams and creeks looked like silver ribbons. It was an ideal ending to an ideal day, thought Gabrielle, and she connected Horace Bryce in her mind with the moonlight and the mountains. The last train was just entering the village as they arrived, and a few moments later the two girls were in their mother's arms.

After eating heartily of a luncheon which Mrs. Crystal had prepared, Horace Bryce jumped into his wagon, and turning his horses' heads, drove down the road. He let the animals walk slowly, and gave himself up to thinking. He remembered that once before he had been in love. At that time he was only nineteen. It was but a passing thing, however, and he had long ago forgotten all about it and the young girl who had been the cause of it.

A little farther down the road he fell to moralizing. "To think that I came up here for a week's rest, and that now I am madly in love with a girl."

The off horse stumbled, and it was only by a dex-

terous movement that its driver prevented it from falling.

"If I was superstitious now," he said to himself, "I might believe that my horse's stumbling was a bad omen, a reminder that there is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip."

Then he lashed the air above the horses' heads and started them in a canter down the moonlit road, thinking what a good little wife Gabrielle Crystal would make.

While he was driving along, Gabrielle sat rocking herself in her room, listening to the sound of the water as it rushed over the stony bed of the creek. A great many thoughts were running through her mind: She was thinking of John Fulton's words—that there was no danger of his ever marrying her—and they filled her heart with bitterness.

Then the thought of Horace Bryce crowded out the thought of John Fulton, and as she rose from her chair she said half aloud to herself, "He is awfully nice!" which words in the mouth of a girl may mean a great deal, as they also may mean very little.

CHAPTER IX.

*" But oh, she dances such a way!
No sun upon an Easter-day
Is half so fine a sight ! "*

MUCH more of Horace Bryce's time was passed at the little white house on the hillside than at his own hotel. The mornings were generally given to long walks, the afternoons to chatting under the old elm-tree, and the monotony of the evenings was relieved, now and again, by going down to the village to play ninepins, which is one of the few amusements in the mountains.

The second Saturday night after the arrival of the Crystals a " hop " was given at the Bryn Mawr House, at which Horace Bryce was stopping, and he had invited his friends to it. In the evening he came up to the farm-house to accompany them to his hotel. In his well-fitting dress suit he looked even more manly than in his ordinary *negligé* costume.

He found John Fulton on the veranda, and they sat there and smoked until Gabrielle and Agnes were ready. Gabrielle was the first to make her appearance.

As she stood in the glare of the lighted hallway and bade him good-evening, Horace Bryce thought she ap-

peared prettier than ever. Her red dress, in contrast with her olive skin turned to a darker shade by the sun, her large black eyes and black hair, made her look as if she had just stepped out of a Spanish picture. John Fulton, taking his cigar from his mouth, gazed at her with a satisfaction which was almost paternal, remarking at the same time, "Gay, if you had a pair of castanets, you would make a splendid Spanish girl."

"One of those," she answered, laughing, as she came over to where the young men were sitting and sat down beside them, "that one sees on the inside of boxes of raisins at the grocery store, I suppose you mean."

"I was just about to make the same remark that Jack has made," Horace Bryce said, with pleasure showing in his eyes. "I think I will introduce you to my friends at the hotel as 'Señorita Dolores Mercedes Gonzales, of Seville.'"

"If the sun keeps on blackening me," she replied, "you will be able to introduce me as 'Arimintha Johnson, of Africa.'"

Agnes, who had just arrived on the veranda in time to hear her sister's remarks, broke into the conversation, saying, "A great many people tell her she is Gay by name and gay by nature; but I don't think any one would tell her to-night that she is Crystal by name and crystal in complexion."

"Oh, don't make puns!" Gabrielle exclaimed as the young men laughed.

Mrs. Crystal, attracted by the voices of her daughters, came out of the house, and Gabrielle appealed to her.

"Mamma, do I look like a Spanish girl?"

"No, dear," answered her mother tenderly, as a little smile began to form about her mouth; "with that flaming red dress and black face, you look as if you came from Fifth Avenue—South."

There was a general laugh at Gabrielle's expense.

"Come, let us go," she said, jumping up from her chair. "I don't object to reminding people of pictures they have seen on boxes of raisins, but to have one's mother tell one that she looks as if she had a touch of the tar-brush, that is really more than I can bear."

They rose at Gabrielle's invitation and made their way down the road. The young men walked in front, directing the girls where to look out for broken boards in the walk. There were no lights along the road, and the moon had not yet risen. The lower half of the village could not come to any agreement with the upper half in regard to lighting their one street, and consequently, unless there was an accommodating moon in the heavens, the street was wrapped in darkness. By great care the young people managed to arrive at their journey's end without loss of life or limb. The dining-room of the hotel had been cleared, and with its walls festooned with flags made a presentable ball-room.

The wide porch was so crowded with visitors who came to look at the dancers, that it was only with great difficulty that Horace Bryce could get seats for Agnes Crystal and John Fulton, who preferred to watch the dance rather than take part in it.

"I understand now," said a young married woman, a cousin of Horace Bryce's, as she took his hand in a waltz quadrille, "why you remain away so much from the hotel."

He made no answer. The next time they met in the dance she added, with a twinkle in her eye, "I like your taste. Gypsy, is she? Can she tell fortunes? What about Miss ——, you know, the tall blonde? She will be awfully cut up if she sees you devoting too much of your time and attention to that little symphony in red."

"I don't understand you," he said, as she danced away from him.

"You don't understand me?" she queried when they met again. "Well, pretend for a moment that you are deeply in conversation with your partner, and then suddenly cast your *beaux yeux* on the third set straight down the room."

Horace Bryce at the first opportunity did as he had been advised, and instantly saw the meaning of his cousin's words. The tall young lady with the blonde hair evidently considered Gabrielle Crystal an intruder, and was looking at her with jealous eyes.

When Horace encountered his cousin again he smiled and said, "I understand now—green-eyed monster. I never suspected anything of the kind."

"She is not the only one either, there are several others," his cousin remarked; "but don't let that affect you. This is a bad season for young men in these parts, and in a country where all the men are blind—

you know the rest ;" and having delivered her thrust she danced away.

The time passed pleasantly for Horace Bryce. He noticed that Gabrielle Crystal attracted not a little attention, and that fact flattered him. Before the end of the evening they became still better friends. Gabrielle had been a trifle nervous in the beginning, as all in the room were strangers to her and somewhat above the set of people with whom she was accustomed to come in contact. This nervousness made her throw herself more on the protection of the young man in whose company she was. It drew them closer together. He looked so big and manly that she felt a pride in him.

While resting between the dances Horace Bryce introduced his cousin to Gabrielle.

"From the amount of time which Horace spends upon the hill," his cousin remarked with a smile, "I think he must be in love with"—she paused as a startled look came into Gabrielle's eyes ; then she continued—"with farm life."

Gabrielle drew a breath of relief, and replied rather innocently, "Yes, he told me that he enjoyed coming up to our farm-house very much."

"Perhaps you don't know that quite a number of the young ladies here have become jealous. They think he is altogether too fond of cows and chickens, and not fond enough of them. However, I have a theory that cows and chickens could never satisfy the heart of Mr. Bryce. What do you think, Miss Crystal?" she asked,

rather deliberately, at the same time looking Gabrielle full in the eyes.

"Why," answered Gabrielle, her manner showing some confusion, "I think that the reason Mr. Bryce comes up to see us so often is because of a friend of his by the name of Mr. Fulton, who came with us to the mountains." The next moment she realized that most of the time Horace Bryce spent at the farm-house was in her company, and the blood showed in her cheeks under the tan.

"Exactly; that's just what I thought," Horace Bryce's cousin answered, looking at Gabrielle in a way which seemed to belie her words.

"Pshaw!" Gabrielle exclaimed, letting the cat out of the bag, "I hope you don't think that Mr. Bryce comes up our way so often just to see me."

"Not at all," replied the older woman, trying in vain to suppress a smile.

"Oh, now you are making fun of me!" Gabrielle answered, with a toss of her head that set the red rose on her hat bobbing. Just then Horace Bryce came to claim her for a dance.

"How do you two get along?" he asked, looking from one to the other.

"Splendidly," his cousin answered. "We are both talking of how passionately fond you are of horses, cows, chickens, and other *living* creatures that are to be found up at the farm-house on the hill."

Horace Bryce saw the point immediately, and glanced at Gabrielle. Each of her cheeks looked as if little

pieces of her dress had jumped into them. The first notes of a waltz struck the air. "You must not mind my cousin, Miss Crystal. She is six months older than I am, and for that reason she has always felt that it was her privilege to treat me maternally."

They danced away together, Horace Bryce secretly thanking his cousin for the blushes she had brought to Gabrielle's cheeks. Growing tired of dancing, they strolled out on the porch in search of Agnes and John Fulton, and found them after a little search. When John Fulton looked at his watch, the lateness of the hour gave the young girls a little shock, as they knew their mother would not go to bed until they came home. Horace Bryce held Gabrielle's wrap for her. "You must not be offended at my cousin's remarks this evening, Miss Crystal," he said apologetically.

She noticed his tone, and hastened to assure him that she was not displeased in the least. "I feel highly honored," she continued, with some warmth of manner, as she fastened her wrap at her throat, "that you find our little farm-house interesting enough to attract you."

He would have liked to say more, but he thought it better to refrain. They walked home briskly to avoid the cold mountain wind chilling them. The Northern Lights swept through the heavens in constantly changing coruscations, filling the girls with a sort of dread, as they had never seen them before on so grand a scale. When they arrived home they found all the household on the porch viewing the wonderful effects of the aurora borealis.

The Crystals and John Fulton remained only another half-week in the mountains, during which time Horace Bryce was a constant visitor at their cottage.

"We have decided to go down to New York to-morrow," Gabrielle announced to him one morning as he took a seat on the porch. "Jack's vacation and my own will be at an end in a few days, and we concluded that it would be a good plan to have a little rest in the city before returning to work, or as we say in New York, 'to business.'"

He paused for a moment, and then said, "I did not intend to remain much longer myself in the mountains, and as things are growing duller at the hotel, if you don't mind I will make one of your party."

"Oh, that would be delightful!" she exclaimed, striking the arms of the chair with her hands; "only it would be too great a sacrifice for you to make. You had better enjoy the mountain air as long as you can, it will do you so much good."

"No," he replied, as he began to realize how he would miss seeing her every day, and how monotonous the time would be without her; "I am thoroughly rested now, and perhaps if I remain longer without being able to enjoy a daily visit here, I might get the blues and begin to lose flesh."

Gabrielle blushed a little, and taking a rose from her corsage bouquet, she handed it to him, remarking at the same time, "You are more than kind to say such a thing."

So it was settled that Horace Bryce would return with them to New York on the morrow.

The next afternoon found them all sitting in a railroad-car which looked as if it had been originally intended for cattle. The cool breezes that rushed up the narrow pass through which the train sped made up, however, in a great measure for the discomforts of the car in which they were travelling. After an hour's ride they left the mountains and the cattle-car behind them, and got on board of a more comfortable train on the main road.

The sun went down by the time they were half way on their journey, and night had fallen over the city long before their train rolled into the Grand Central Station.

Horace Bryce parted company with the Crystals at the Elevated Railroad, he going to the north and they to the south.

"Be sure and keep your promise to call on us as soon as you are able," Gabrielle said, as he took her hand. "I already feel a little lonesome at the idea of not seeing you as often as I did in the mountains."

He bowed to her in acknowledgment of the compliment, and shaking her hand warmly, answered, "So do I."

CHAPTER X.

"Look here, upon this picture, and on this."

AS a rule, no matter how long the average New Yorker may be away from the metropolis, he need be in it again but for the space of half an hour, breathe a few whiffs of its air, a little oppressive on the lungs after a stay in the purer atmosphere of the mountains, hear the shouts of the cabmen, the tinkle of street-car bells, the cry of newsboys, the rattle of heavy trucks, and the rush of the elevated cars overhead, and he forgets almost immediately that he has been away at all from the city. He takes up his life again as easily and quickly as if he had been absent only for a few hours. To this rule, as to all rules, there are exceptions, however, exceptions which Horace Bryce exemplifies.

He was back in New York, it is true, sitting in the front car of an elevated train, rattling by long lines of tenements, with the smoke and the heavy odor of oil coming in through the windows, but his mind was far away. Instead of experiencing any discomfort from the smoke and oil, he was enjoying the aroma of summer grass and the delicate perfume of a girl's dress. The electric-lighted avenue that he could see below him was a long country road flooded with moonlight. The red bull's-eye lanterns of the engines were bunches of

red poppies. The roofs of the high tenements, with their brick chimneys and glass skylights, were mountains covered with spruce and maple trees.

When the conductor, leaning within the doorway, relieved himself of a jargon of words with the consonants unpronounced, which meant Sixty-seventh Street, his message gave Horace Bryce a start.

The young man caught his valise as he recollected himself, and hurried to the door. The conductor grumbled something about people delaying the train, but Horace Bryce heeded him not. He was angry that the station had been reached so quickly and his reverie so ruthlessly broken. A walk of a few blocks brought him to his home, a modest, three-story, brown-stone house, the upper part of which was wrapped in darkness. Seeing a light in the basement, he rang the bell.

An old housekeeper appeared and welcomed him. His father and mother, she said, had gone down to the seashore for a few days, but would be back probably the next day.

The housekeeper wanted to prepare something for him to eat, but he told her not to mind, as he could get it himself. He went to the ice-box, picked up some cold meat and some pickles, found a head of lettuce, for which he mixed a dressing, made a cup of chocolate on the gas-stove, and sitting down enjoyed himself. After he had finished his meal he carried his valise up to his room. Then he took from his bag the plate-holders which held the plates he had used the day of the excursion to the falls. Just off his sleeping apartment there

was an empty room, which he used as a dark room in which to develop plates. Taking the holders with him, he went in there and closed the door. He lit his ruby lamp, prepared a developing solution, and began developing. He watched the plate nervously as he tilted the tray from side to side to cover the plate completely with the developer. Little by little the smoke began to clear away from its sides. The rocks first showed dimly, then the hanging lace of a girl's sleeve, and then the folds of her dress and the texture began to be visible. The white mist hung for a longer time over the middle of the plate, making the amateur photographer a bit anxious. But finally it cleared away, and Gabrielle Crystal, holding in her hand the wild flowers which he had gathered for her, stood against the rocks, with the spray from the falls making a halo about her.

The plate promised a beautiful picture.

Photography was surely made for lovers! The Romeos and Juliets of olden times missed a great deal in being born before the days of the Kodak and the Hawkeye. What a happiness it would have been to the heir of the proud house of Montague, could he have climbed the wall enclosing the garden of the Capulets, and in the twinkling of an eye photographed his Juliet as she stood among the tall roses, or sat dreaming of him on her balcony! Or yet to have dared more, to have taken her by flash light when they were in Juliet's room, trying to decide whether it was the nightingale or lark that sang "in yon pomegranate-tree." He then would have possessed a solace sweet in Mantua.

Despite the disadvantages of not having had a perfect light the day he had taken the pictures, Horace Bryce had succeeded in getting two excellent photographs of Gabrielle. The group pictures of John Fulton, Gabrielle, and Agnes, though not perfect, were what photographers would pronounce successful.

Well satisfied with himself, he put away his photographic kit and retired to his room to rest, a very happy young man.

The following Monday morning Horace Bryce, who held a position as clerk in the post-office to which John Fulton was attached as a letter-carrier, met the latter as he returned from his first delivery, with an empty mail-bag hanging over his shoulder. They greeted each other very cordially. Horace Bryce felt thankful to John Fulton, because it was through him that he had become acquainted with Gabrielle Crystal.

"I saw Gay last night," the letter-carrier said, as he relieved himself of his bag, "and she asked me to remember her to you when I met you in the morning. She is anxious to see how you have succeeded with the pictures."

Horace Bryce intended going down to Eldridge Street on the following Thursday evening. Gabrielle's anxiety made him anxious, too, and so he replied, "I wish you would tell Miss Crystal that I have sent the plates to a photographer to have them printed and the pictures mounted, and as they will be ready to-morrow, I can bring them down to her to-morrow evening."

John Fulton delivered the message that night and

brought back Gabrielle's answer in the morning. She was on the tiptoe of expectancy, most anxious to see him and the photographs.

The same evening about eight o'clock Horace Bryce rang the second little silver bell on the door of the house in which the Crystals lived.

The house was an old-fashioned one without a patent door-opener, which made it necessary every time the bell rang for some one of the family to come down and open the door. Horace Bryce did not have long to wait. He heard the patter of feet on the stairs, and then the door swung open and revealed Gabrielle. Her smiling eyes showed how glad she was to see him ; his told to hers the same story.

"It's awfully good of you to come," she said, as she reached out her hand to him ; "I was afraid that perhaps your promise would be like most of those which are made in the country in the summer time."

"How is that ?" he asked, as he released her hand.

"Oh, don't you know that promises made at summer resorts are made to be broken ?"

"Surely you don't believe that I would make you a promise"—he pressed ever so little on the "you"—"and then break it, do you ?" The slightest touch of pink came into her cheeks.

"Well, no ; I don't believe you would," she answered, with a good deal of feeling ; then to relieve her embarrassment she continued, "I was awfully anxious to see how the photographs had come out."

"The one of the group is quite good, but the one of

you alone is exquisite. Even though I say it myself, I don't think I ever succeeded so well with a picture. That is one of the strange things about photography. When you are very careful and everything favors you, your attempt will often prove a failure ; and, again, when you work under difficulties you sometimes achieve the greatest success. The light at the time I took the picture was not what I would have wished, and yet it is wonderfully good."

They went upstairs, and he produced the pictures. Mrs. Crystal and Agnes were there. He explained how well the details had come out in Gabrielle's picture—the pattern of the lace on her dress and the fine spray from the water tumbling down the rocks.

"I think the reason I was so successful was because I had such an excellent subject," he said, addressing himself to Agnes.

Gabrielle made a funny little courtesy.

"Precisely," Agnes replied ; "Gay takes a splendid picture. You see, she has had considerable practice in front of a camera. The first twenty-five cents she was ever given to spend she invested in four tin-types of herself."

Gabrielle joined in the general laugh.

"You did not have any difficulty finding your way here, I hope?" Agnes asked.

"No ; it was all plain sailing," he answered.

"Well, what do you think of the great East Side, Mr. Bryce ? Do you believe we are all Indians down here ?" said Gabrielle.

He leaned back a little in his chair and replied, "Perhaps you won't believe me when I say it, but, nevertheless, though I have been born and brought up in the city, this is the first time that I have ever been in this neighborhood. Whatever knowledge I have of it is from newspapers and magazine articles."

"You must have been a little afraid of us, then," said Agnes, "when we told you in the mountains where we lived?"

"No; I immediately changed my opinion of the East Side."

"Oh, how kind of you to say so!" Gabrielle exclaimed. "We were unconscious missionaries, then, and converted you."

"Completely," he answered.

"Ah me," sighed Gabrielle, "the poor East Side! It is really very bad, but still there is here and there an oasis of 'culture,' Mr. Bryce, as you must have noticed as soon as you fell in with us." She continued, "It's our own fault if we residents of the East Side do not improve. I'm sure everything that is necessary to make people cultured is done for us. There are free libraries, free picture galleries, and free potted plants. Culture is in the air, and it's only by being obstinate that we escape it."

"You're like Wordsworth's man, perhaps," he said.

"Who is he, pray?"

"He is the gentleman of whom it was said that

" 'A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.' "

"That's our case exactly," Gabrielle assented. "Oh, I shiver and shudder when I think of what an account we shall have to render for not striving to be more cultured! Agnes, I am determined to become cultured. The first opportunity offers itself I am going to go to one of those places where potted plants are presented and ask for a yellow primrose."

"But you are the personification of culture," he hastened to answer her.

"Oh," she exclaimed, as if he frightened her, "how can you say such a thing, Mr. Bryce?"

"Because culture is 'Sweetness and Light.' Now the first vision I had of both of you in the mountain, the day we first met, made me exclaim to myself unconsciously, 'Sweetness and Light.'"

"You did not think I was *too* light, did you?" Agnes asked.

"Nor that I was too sweet to be wholesome?" Gabrielle added.

"Oh, how difficult it is to say nice things to you young ladies!" he said, with a sigh. "You forever discourage them."

"That's my sister's fault," Gabrielle declared. "She is always trying to steer clear of anything that might be to her an occasion of pride and vanity. And she's got me almost as bad as herself. Say, Agnes"—turning to her sister—"how old were you when you began to avoid the seven deadly sins?"

"One day old."

Horace Bryce laughed.

Mrs. Crystal came into the room with a tray filled with refreshments. Gabrielle jumped up to assist her.

"We always treat everybody that comes to our house the same way. We give them ice-cream, lemonade, and cake. Sometimes we vary the cake, but that's the baker's fault. After that I generally play the piano and sing for them."

"She won't sing for you to-night, Mr. Bryce; we won't let her," Agnes assured him.

"Can I speak a piece?"

"The boy stood on the burning deck,
On Linden, when the sun was low.
There was a sound of revelry by night,
In Bingen, fair Bingen on the Rhine!"

"Now, you've done it with your gestures!" exclaimed Agnes, "spilling lemonade on your mother's new carpet."

"Have some Eldridge Street ice-cream, Mr. Bryce," said Gabrielle, handing him a plate of vanilla and chocolate mixed. "Darkness and Light," she explained.

"But I want the sweetness," he said emphatically.

Agnes noticed with a little surprise that he spoke rather earnestly.

"You get the sweetness," Gabrielle answered, "by a combination of the mixture."

He sat back in his chair and ate the ice-cream and smilingly watched Gabrielle.

They rehearsed the things which they had done in the mountains. Later the bell rang and John Fulton came in.

"Do you know, Jack, that this is the first time I have ever been in this neighborhood?" Horace Bryce remarked as John Fulton took a seat.

"Is that a fact? How did you ever live so long in New York without wandering down this way?"

"I'm blessed if I know. I suppose because I was born in the city. If I had lived in a town along the Hudson River, probably I would have seen more of New York than I have."

They passed the time pleasantly chatting until it was late. The gas in the hallway was out when Horace Bryce started to go. Gabrielle brought a lamp to light him down the stairs. He turned to say good night once more as he reached the bottom step. Gabrielle's dark eyes, sparkling in the light of the lamp which she held above her head, gave her a bewitching look.

"I don't know whether you remind me most of Juliet on her balcony or Miss Liberty enlightening the world," he said, looking up at her.

"I'm in a quandary, too," she replied over the banister. "I cannot decide whether you are more like Romeo in the garden, or"—she quickly turned the light low—"Moses when the light went out."

They parted in merry humor.

John Fulton accompanied Horace Bryce, and instead of going direct to the nearest station of the Elevated Road, they made a detour to the south. The night was very warm, and the whole population, which was mainly Jewish, was out on the streets.

The stores, basements, fire-escapes, sidewalks, and

even the middle of the streets were alive with babies in arms, toddlers, young boys and girls, and men and women. They wandered in and out and around each other like ants. There was as much business done on the sidewalk as in the stores and basements. Peddlers hawked about suspenders, cheap jewelry, letter paper and envelopes, handkerchiefs, and all kinds of fruit.

At every corner there were several soda-water fountains. Printed signs told that the soda-water was a penny and two cents a glass. Swedish champagne, the latest summer beverage, cost three cents. The glasses were large and thick, probably to prevent their being broken if dropped on the pavement by the children. The men with watermelons, one cent a slice, could hardly supply the mob about their carts quickly enough.

With great difficulty the young men made their way through the dense crowds, hearing as they went by, the expression, often repeated, "There goes two Christs," pronounced like the first syllable in the word Christian. When they reached Grand Street the wide sidewalks made walking more easy, and they soon arrived at the station of the Elevated Road.

An advancing train hastened Horace Bryce's departure, and he hurried up the stairs and into the car, to sit and think—not of the sights he had seen on his first visit to the East Side, but only of Gabrielle.

CHAPTER XI.

*"Fare thee well! and if forever,
Still forever fare thee well."*

HORACE BRYCE came regularly to visit the Crystals, and saw a great deal of Gabrielle. His love for her grew stronger every day. For her part, she was glad to see him, enjoyed his company, and made him welcome every time he came. There was no doubt but that she liked him very well.

It happened that on several occasions when he was visiting the Crystals a young woman, an intimate friend of Gabrielle's, chanced to drop in to see her. Stella Conway was the senior of Gabrielle Crystal by a few months, and was remarkable for many things, especially her weight. Whenever she stood on a weighing machine, the register indicated at least one hundred and eighty pounds, which is considerable for one so young. She was tall, however—a fact which saved her. There could be no fear that she would later in life develop into a pudgy woman, a fate which threatens most young girls who run to flesh and do not add to their stature. She was clever enough, though she never won a prize in the college from which she was graduated. She was not the kind of a girl who, if awakened suddenly in the night, could tell whether there was a

comma or semicolon at the end of the last line on the fiftieth page of one of her text-books. She knew the matter, but it was never photographed on her mind. Among her friends Stella Conway passed as the "Authoress," and "thereby hangs a tale."

On a certain day several public-school teachers were taking dinner in one of the class-rooms. The talk turned on novel-reading, and one of the group, who had picked up that morning in the hallway of her house a sample copy of *The Weekly Companion*, a famous story-paper, began to praise one of the stories which she had read on her way to school. Stella Conway poohpoohed it, saying that it was not even original.

The teacher who had praised it was somewhat provoked, and told Stella that she could not do as well herself, and therefore she ought not to be so ready to criticise.

Instead of becoming angry, Stella became comical.

"Why, this is all you have to do to write a story like the one you describe," she said, leaving her dinner and going over to the blackboard. "First you draw a young man"—she suited the action to the word, drawing a ludicrous outline of a man with the chalk—"you make him fair or dark, just as you please. In this case I will give him fair hair and eyebrows, as I have only white chalk. He should have teeth, of course." She drew a mouth in the centre of the round head, making little perpendicular strokes to indicate teeth. "It would be better not to say too much about his teeth. You can leave your fine description of 'pearls in the mouth' for the young ladies who are to figure in the

story. Now, if you make this young man the son of a millionaire, send him to a university, where he blossoms out as the captain of the foot-ball eleven, that will help the story considerably. Next it is necessary to have two young women. One should be like unto this," continued the artist, drawing a ridiculously tall outline of a female. "You had better give this tall one dark, cruel eyes, lips that have no difficulty in curling up indignantly when anger sweeps the face, and she must have a very haughty bearing. She is a Vere de Vere, with diamonds for ornaments. In the story she must be in love with the young man. Besides the cruel father and the members of the foot-ball eleven, only one more character is necessary to complete the story. This one, who is also a young lady, must be rather small." Miss Conway drew a squat-looking figure with the chalk. "She must have blond tresses like fine, spun gold, melting eyes full of love, and a modest demeanor, the more humble and retiring, the better. She earns her living by working for the millionaire father of the young man.

"The plot of the story is quite simple. Miss Vere de Vere falls in love with the gilded youth. He rather favors the young girl in his father's employ. The green-eyed monster must be brought on the stage, and the poor girl injured in some way—loss of her position will do. Jealousy must eat at the heart of Miss Vere de Vere, as the fox ate at the breast of the Spartan lad. About the middle of the story a complication should arise. The young girl who has lost her position must

refuse the hero's hand, giving as a reason that she is a poor girl and far beneath him ; but adding naïvely that she loves him, and though she cannot become his wife, still she will never love another as long as her life drags its weary length along. This declaration, of course, only increases his love. A few more chapters may be added, in which the agony is piled on, until the young man overcomes her scruples, and she consents to marry him, much to the discomfort of the tall brunette. The father can be made to forgive his son, or he can be killed before he has a chance to change his will, and thus the son would inherit all, his father being a widower."

The little group of school-teachers, with the exception of her opponent, greatly enjoyed Stella Conway's fooling.

"It's all very easy to do with chalk," she replied ; "but I am sure if you sent your story to one of the weekly papers, it would be returned with 'thanks.' "

Miss Conway recklessly wagered a box of candy that it would not. Her opponent accepted the offer, and the consequence was that Miss Conway wrote the story, and received a check for twenty dollars from the publishers of *The Weekly Companion*, with a request for more contributions. From that time on she was known as the "Authoress" among her friends.

When Stella Conway, who knew that Gabrielle Crystal had always thought a great deal of John Fulton, noticed that Horace Bryce was such a frequent visitor at her friend's house, her curiosity became aroused.

One evening in the latter part of October she chanced to drop in at the Crystals, and found Agnes sitting alone, sewing.

"Working for the poor as usual, I suppose, Agnes?" she exclaimed. "Give it up for a few moments and talk to me. The poor you have always with you, but I am only going to remain five minutes."

Agnes stuck her needle in her work and laid it aside.

"Are you alone?" Stella Conway asked, peering about the room.

"It looks like it," Agnes replied.

"Where's your pa and ma and Gay?"

"They have gone to see Jack Fulton's mother; she has been quite ill lately."

"Well, as long as I have been lucky enough to find you alone," Stella said, seating herself, "I want to ask you a question about something which has given me a great deal of worry for the last month. What I should like to know is the real state of Gay's heart. Is she still fond of Jack Fulton, or has she fallen in love with that young man whose name rhymes with rice?"

Agnes Crystal had often of late put the same question to herself, but she did not expect to hear it propounded so abruptly by another. She blushed and showed such confusion that Stella Conway for a moment did not feel like pursuing the matter any further.

"I did not mean to be inquisitive, Agnes, and I am sorry if I have been impertinent."

Agnes rallied from her confusion and answered, "To

be candid with you, Stella, I am in as much of a quandary as you yourself. A few months ago I would have said that Gay was in love with Jack. I still think she loves him, and that this interest in Mr. Bryce is only a passing one. However, I must admit that at present I myself am somewhat puzzled."

"If you could throw a little light on the subject, I might be able to give Gay a few words of advice. Coming from me, they would have a great deal of weight—a hundred and eighty pounds, you know."

Agnes smiled, but made no answer.

"Suppose I constitute myself an investigating committee to find out the true state of that child's heart? She is really too young to know her own mind."

"You may do so if you like. I will be neutral in the matter."

"I would rather that you would enter into my scheme," Stella Conway proposed, "as you can give me much help. I am a little anxious to get some definite knowledge, on account of a remark which I heard to-day."

"What was that?" Agnes asked.

"Some one said that Gay is using her Catskill Mountain acquaintance to make John Fulton jealous; that she hopes to be able to strike the jealous chord in his heart, and by this means to awaken him from his lethargy."

Such a thought had never entered Agnes Crystal's mind. Even if it had occurred to her, she would have

put it away immediately as a disloyalty to her sister. Her face grew more serious as she replied :

" I think that is uncharitable. I cannot believe that Gay would stoop to do such a mean thing."

" I did not believe it either when I heard the remark, and I told the young lady so who made it. But I noticed at the same time that she was reading one of Henry James's stories, and then I partly understood the reason for her remark. Whenever you read one of those analytic novels you get to thinking that you know it all, and at every opportunity you make a study of human nature, and end by attributing all sorts of mean motives to people."

Agnes, at first somewhat reticent, grew a little more confiding, and said, " I frankly admit, Stella, that Gay is an enigma to me, and I am glad of this chance to talk over the matter with you and hear your opinions."

" Well, then, if you are willing to leave it to me," said the Authoress, rising, " I'll settle all doubts. I must hurry home now, as those dreadful examiners are coming to school to-morrow to examine the children, and I have some school-work to get ready. But before I go," she added, as she laid her hand on the knob of the door, " I don't mind telling you my plan for finding out the true state of Gay's heart. It is a very simple one. I intend to make love to Jack Fulton."

Before Agnes Crystal could recover from her surprise the Authoress swept out of the room. She came back again for a moment and said :

" Remember to say a prayer for me to-night that the

children will do well. I hate to be made a fool of before those examiners." Then she was gone.

Agnes remained sitting where she was for a long time after her friend had departed, meditating on Gabrielle. Much as she endeavored to drive out of her head the idea of Gabrielle using Horace Bryce as a tool to make Jack Fulton jealous, and thus stir up any latent love that might be hid away in his breast, it came back ever and anon, and worried and saddened her. Thus, as the poet says, doth suspicion "work like madness in the brain." Much as we may wish to believe only good of those we know, it is a comparatively easy thing to make even the most loyal friends suspicious of one another. The little rift within the lute widens very quickly.

The next evening the Authoress came in to see the Crystals again, ostensibly to let Agnes know that the children had vanquished the examiners, but really to question Gabrielle. In the flow of talk Stella made the interesting discovery that Horace Bryce was to call the following evening to take Gabrielle to the theatre. In an instant the Authoress had made up her mind to act.

"You might stay a half-hour, Stella," pleaded Gabrielle, going over to a small table near the piano and picking up several pieces of music. "I have copies of three songs which are sung in the play we are going to see, and I would like you to run over them a few times ; you play so much better than I do."

The Authoress sighed profoundly. "Sorry, Gay, I cannot accommodate you after your being so confec-

tionery, but really I must go. *Auf Wiedersehn*, as they say in Ireland."

The Authoress tripped down the stairs in great glee, and the next moment was ringing John Fulton's bell. He came to the door himself. She inquired concerning his mother's health, and he made answer that the best way for her to find out how his mother was feeling was to come upstairs and see for herself. The Authoress did not hesitate to accept the invitation. She found John Fulton's mother improved, and he noticed with pleasure how much brighter his mother became as she listened to the running fire of jokes and stories, of which the Authoress had an abundance.

"I believe you are the happiest girl in New York," Mrs. Fulton remarked as the Authoress rose to go.

Stella Conway sighed a deep sigh, which long practice and much flesh had made peculiar to herself.

"So everybody tells me. I suppose it's because I'm stout. Stout people are always happy, and thin people are always pious, at least that's what a great many think. But the cap doesn't fit me." She flicked the skirt of her dress in an apparently impatient manner and dropped her eyes to the floor.

John Fulton and his mother noted in surprise the look of sadness that came into her face.

"What's the trouble?" Mrs. Fulton asked sympathetically; "anything wrong with the folks?"

"No; it's only a little thing—it's the blues, I guess. I grow so weary of being eternally stuck at home and

not getting any of the little pleasures which fall to the lot of other girls."

John Fulton wondered at her words, having always believed that she had about as much enjoyment as most of the girls he knew ; but when she made the remark he became convinced that he had been mistaken.

"It's a kind of uneven world," the Authoress continued, as Mrs. Fulton made no reply to her last words. "There is Gay Crystal going to the theatre to-morrow evening for the second time this month with that young man she met in the Catskills. The next time I see her I will have the pleasure of listening to a *description* of the play." Her voice grew harsh and sarcastic as she uttered the last sentence. She raised her eyes from the floor for an instant to see what effect her words might have had on John Fulton. She noticed immediately that he had fallen into the trap. He was embarrassed in his manner as he began speaking.

"Talking about theatres, Stella," he said, rather abashed, "reminds me that there is a play on the boards at the Fifth Avenue which all the papers have been praising, and which I am most anxious to see. Suppose now that you and I go up there to-morrow evening? Is it a bargain?"

"Oh, no, thanks!" she exclaimed, shaking her head as if the acceptance of his proposal was altogether out of the question. "I am sorry I spoke as I did. I hope you don't imagine that I go about advertising my want of happiness in order to get sympathy and favors from others."

He looked at her for a moment with a mild protest in his eyes, and then remarked slowly, "What an ungracious thing for you to say!"

She rubbed her hand across her eyes and was silent.

"He is so good, so sincere," she thought; "it seems a crime to be so hypocritical." She knew how much of a gentleman he was, and what an easy thing it would be for any girl to impose on his generosity. Then she thought of his having to leave his mother if he took her to the theatre, and she repented of what she was doing. She raised her eyes to his for an instant, and said softly and sincerely, "I did not mean to say such a brutal thing, but, really, I cannot go."

"Nonsense, child!" exclaimed Mrs. Fulton, from the rocking-chair in which she sat propped up with pillows. "You must go with Jack, and then you can come around the next evening and tell me all about the play. I feel so much better since you have come in, that I believe another night of your company will cure me entirely."

The Authoress cast a grateful glance at her, but said nothing. "It's all for Gay's sake," she thought, "and Jack Fulton was always glad to do any kindness to Gay Crystal."

The next night John Fulton and Stella Conway sat in the front row of the balcony of the Fifth Avenue Theatre and enjoyed the latest London success, "In Silly Sooth."

"Guess what, Gay!" exclaimed Agnes Crystal, interrupting her sister, who was seated at the piano play-

ing and humming the new songs which she had heard the night before ; " Stella Conway dropped in this morning, just after you had gone to the office, and told me that Jack had taken her to see ' In Silly Sooth,' at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, last evening."

The playing ceased immediately.

" Jack took Stella Conway to the theatre !" Gabrielle exclaimed aloud. The words seemed to daze her, and she repeated them several times audibly, as if trying to understand their meaning. After the silence had lasted several moments Agnes continued :

" Yes, and she told me that Jack had promised to spend next Sunday evening at her house."

When Agnes had imparted this bit of news she stood up and began to wind the onyx clock that ornamented the centre of the mantel, at the same time watching the effect of her words upon her sister.

Gabrielle still sat on the piano-stool, unconscious of her surroundings. She seemed to have forgotten her sister's presence. After a long reverie her mind began to work again and ideas to shape themselves. She threw one arm on the piano and rested her head on her hand. Was, then, Jack Fulton slipping away from her ? she thought. Could it be possible that he was falling in love with Stella Conway ? She remembered with a shock of pain that she had heard him praise the Authoress several times. Her mind began to travel back slowly over the events of the last few months. It was now the beginning of November. In the latter part of July she had asked her sister to pray that John

Fulton would at least learn to look upon her as a young woman, and not as a child. Then had come the shock she had received in the mountains. She chanced upon Horace Bryce just at that time, and he brought with him the aroma of wild flowers, the recollection of bright ball-rooms, of books and theatres. He had not only delighted her, but treated her with a gallantry which John Fulton had never thought of showing to her. These recollections passed before her like a panorama. Then came the thought, suppose Jack Fulton should fall in love with some one else? It gave her heart a wrench and robbed her cheeks of their color. She clutched at the piano-cover nervously with her hand. To lose Jack was to lose happiness forever. In an instant the idea of Horace Bryce palled upon her.

Agnes, standing at the mantel, noticed the color fade from her sister's cheeks, and dropped the metal clock-key, as if by accident, on the marble slab of the mantel.

The sharp ring of the key startled Gabrielle and brought her back to her senses. She wheeled about on the stool and gave the piano a few nervous sweeps with her trembling fingers. The playing seemed to relieve and compose her.

"Do you believe, Agnes," she asked, as she let her fingers run idly over the keys, "that Jack thinks anything of Stella Conway? I know," she added hastily, "that he likes her, for I often heard him say so; but do you think he has any *great* liking for her?"

"I don't quite understand what you mean by 'a

great liking.' Do you mean to ask me whether I believe he loves her?"

Gabrielle paused for a moment and ceased her playing.

"Yes, that is what I mean."

"Just at present," Agnes answered, "I do not think that Jack is in love with anybody except his mother. Of course, no one can tell what the future may develop."

Gabrielle rose from her chair and walked up and down the room once or twice, and finally paused and leaned on the piano.

"Do you remember, Agnes, the first time I spoke to you seriously about being in love with Jack Fulton, and that I asked you to say a prayer for me?"

"Yes; I remember the occasion very well," Agnes replied.

"I suppose you gave up that practice long ago?"

"Not at all; you didn't tell me to stop, so I kept on making a memento for you every day."

This little act of fidelity touched Gabrielle and gave her more courage. She sat on the piano-stool, and for the first time faced her sister.

"Suppose, Agnes," she began with a faint smile, "that I make you my father confessor, and tell you the state of my soul, or rather of my heart?"

"If it will relieve you any, Gay, I shall be only too glad to listen."

Gabrielle folded her hands in her lap. "I will begin in the orthodox way," she said. "It is about three

months since my last confession—to you. At that time I told you very frankly how I felt toward Jack, and how little he suspected the state of my feelings. You encouraged me, and even promised to pray for me. That fact heartened me and made me happy. The day we started for the mountains I was in high hopes. I thought it likely that during our few weeks' vacation there, a change might come over Jack. About the second or third day after our arrival I met with a cruel disappointment. I was sitting in the corner of the parlor, late in the afternoon. Jack came along the porch and met Sadie Van Volkenburg, the old farmer's niece. You were walking at the end of the lawn. The two of them stopped on the porch to chat, where I could hear them. Sadie Van Volkenburg brought the conversation around to you, remarking that you were the kind of a girl that girls like. Then she rambled on until finally she began to speak of me. As soon as my name was mentioned I hastily gathered up my sewing and rose to go, not wanting to be guilty of eavesdropping. My spool of thread slipped from my hand and rolled under the sofa. I stooped to find it, and just as I had done so I heard Miss Van Volkenburg say, 'I am sure of one thing, and that is that Gay will never enter a convent.' The remark seemed such a funny one that I listened further. 'Oh, you can't be sure,' Jack replied; 'a few years may make a great change in a girl's notions.' 'But you would have something to say about that,' she laughed. 'How?' asked Jack, noticing, as I did, some implication in her laugh. 'Oh,' she ex-

claimed, 'as if I didn't notice that you two were in love with each other!' Jack laughed at what he considered the absurdity of the idea. At the sound of his laughter all hope died within me.

"'I am afraid, Miss Van Volkenburg,' Jack answered, when he had ceased laughing, 'that you would make a poor fortune-teller. Gay and I have been old friends since she was a little girl at school, so, naturally, we think a great deal of each other.' 'Perhaps the long friendship may have ripened into love,' Miss Van Volkenburg persisted. 'Why, it has ripened into that long ago,' he answered. 'When Gay was only ten years of age I told her that she was the best girl in New York, and she whispered in my ear that she liked me better than anybody else in the world, except her mamma and papa and her sister Agnes. So, you see, it's an affair of the heart of long standing between Gay and me.' 'But I mean,' persisted Miss Van Volkenburg, in her high voice, 'that that early child-love has blossomed into the real thing.' Jack, noticing her persistency, asked, 'Do you mean that we are really in love with each other?' 'Of course I do,' she replied, 'and you'll be married before next summer.' 'Oh, dear!' Jack sighed, 'you are a wonderful romancer, Miss Van Volkenburg; but you had better take my word for it, that Gay and I are not in love, and that there is not the slightest fear that I shall ever marry her.' Just then the supper-bell rang, and Miss Van Volkenburg tripped off to assist her aunt at the supper-table.

I went up to my room sick and disheartened. A few

mornings afterward we took that walk up the mountain and met Mr. Bryce. Perhaps I have been under a sort of spell since then, but it is no use," Gabrielle said, shaking her head. "If Jack falls in love with Stella Conway or anybody else, I suppose I must get over it; but it will be such a disappointment that I will follow in the footsteps of Mary Somerset, and never marry at all. Now you have heard my confession, Agnes, and I know I have thoroughly scandalized you by the want of delicacy I have shown in so openly admitting how much I love Jack; but at least you will have to give me credit for being honest. I am a Christian, and if the worst comes to the worst, I will bear up as bravely as any one could."

What Agnes was thinking of during her sister's recital was the injustice which had been done Gabrielle by the young woman who had insinuated that she was simply making use of Horace Bryce as a means of opening John Fulton's eyes by jealousy. Gabrielle's avowal was an immense relief to Agnes.

"I don't know whether you have realized it or not," Agnes remarked, when Gabrielle had finished speaking, "but it is very plain to me that Horace Bryce is in love with you."

Gabrielle started a little at the serious tone of her sister's voice.

"You really do not believe that, do you?" she exclaimed, as her eyes opened wide with wonder.

Agnes said she was sure of it.

Gabrielle still doubted.

"Of course I could see that he liked to visit us, but I never imagined that he had any great fondness for me ; surely you exaggerate."

"I don't think that I exaggerate one little bit. The reason I speak so seriously to you is, that if you do not care for him, you should not let him misunderstand you. Even I, myself, not knowing all the circumstances, had begun to imagine that you had transferred your affection from Jack to him."

Gabrielle dropped her eyes to the carpet and commenced to make little folds in her skirt.

"I am not as fickle as that, though I suppose I deserve to be thought so. I admit that I was always glad to see Mr. Bryce, but," she added, rising, "it is all over now. I don't want to see him any more."

The next evening Horace Bryce called, and Agnes entertained him. Gabrielle was indisposed and could not be seen. He did not remain long, and when going asked Agnes anxiously to let him know in the morning, through Jack Fulton, how Gabrielle felt. Agnes watched him as he made his way along the street, until he disappeared around the corner.

"It will be very hard," she said to herself, "for him to give her up."

The next morning a district messenger boy rang the bell and delivered a bouquet of flowers to Agnes, who came to the door. It was sent by Horace Bryce to Gabrielle, and on the back of his card was written, "So sorry you are ill."

Gabrielle put the flowers away.

CHAPTER XII.

*"The cosey fire is bright and gay,
The merry kettle boils away
And hums a cheerful song.
I sing, the saucer and the cup;
Pray, Mary, fill the teapot up,
And do not make it strong."*

ON a Friday evening about the middle of November, the back windows of the row of tenements in Forsyth Street, where live the "Children of the Ghetto," were bright with the light of many candles, and old men, with prayer shawls over their shoulders, were moving their arms and heads to and fro as they said their evening prayers. The Shabbas or Sabbath day of the Jews had already begun. They keep more closely to their religious rites and ceremonies in Forsyth Street than do their richer brethren who live on Lexington Avenue. A few times a year these Hebrews form in processions and march up Second Avenue, carrying transparencies on which are emblazoned the legends, "Eight Hours is a Day's Work"; "Down with the Sweaters"; "Pants Makers' Association—Crush Monopoly," and like sentiments in English and Hebrew. During the rest of the year they are very quiet, and sometimes very poor.

In the back room of the Crystals, the windows of

which looked out on the rear windows of the houses in Forsyth Street, four young ladies sat sewing for the indigent, on this Friday evening. There are a great many poor people living in the district enclosed by Houston Street, the Bowery, and Grand Street. Some of them are poor because they have not the strength to do hard work, or because they are not practical enough to make money ; some because they do not know how to keep money after they have earned it ; others are poor because it pays ; and a minority are poor by spells, because they cannot reconcile themselves to the fact that people living in the same house with them should get relief and they not have a finger in the pie.

An early cold snap in the beginning of the month had reminded Agnes Crystal that it was time to begin sewing for the needy ones. She had gathered about her to compose her sewing school three members besides herself—Gabrielle, Stella Conway, and Mary Somerset. They gave two evenings of the week to the work, and during the winter accomplished a great deal.

“ Say, Agnes,” the Authoress remarked, as they all sat about the open grate fire, “ I believe this makes the third quilt we have finished so far this month, and you have not disposed of any of them as yet. What seems to be the matter with the worthy poor ? Do they draw the line at your quilts ?”

Agnes looked up from her work and smiled.

“ Don’t get discouraged, Stella ; the winter is young yet. I gave away so many things last year to people who did not need them, that I am a little tired of

being fooled. This winter I intend to use more judgment."

"I'll tell you what we will do," said Gabrielle, with the glare of the fire lighting up her face; "let us make another, and then we will have one each. A bitter cold night is sure to come along soon. When it does, we can take the quilts down to the street, and the first four frozen-looking men we see, we will wrap the quilts about them, and then charge back to the house."

"Second the motion! as we say at our club," exclaimed the Authoress. "That is a brilliant idea, Gay. In fact, it's the true Christian spirit—going out into the highways and byways and clothing poor, unprotected men who have no place to go but 'out.' Wouldn't it be a consolation for us," she continued, dropping her voice in mock sadness, "when coming home of a winter's evening from a dollar seat in a warm theatre, to see a man lying asleep in a big truck in Eldridge Street, wrapped up in one of our quilts? Why, our society would become famous, and the newspaper reporters would be looking for our photographs, so as to write up articles on the S. P. S. C.—the Society for the Promotion of Sleeping in Carts."

"I am afraid that we are famous already," said Mary Somerset, interrupting the voluble Authoress. Mary Somerset was older than the other members of the sewing school. She had fallen in love with a young man who gave promise of a brilliant future, but filled an early grave. The politicians of the district in which he lived, noticing his cleverness, had persuaded him to give

up his position in a good business and enter politics. He did so, and soon afterward began staying out late at night and drinking. Mary Somerset waited for him to change, until the bloom had left her cheeks and little lines appeared at the corners of her eyes. One election night he caught cold, and it developed into hasty consumption. She helped his mother nurse him until he died. Then the two women lived together, and Mary Somerset thought no more of marriage.

When Agnes Crystal spoke of forming a sewing school on a small scale, she asked to be made one of the members.

"You young girls will need some old, motherly person to look after you," she said, with a smile; "and I certainly am old enough to fill that position. You can see for yourself that my hair is quite gray in places."

"Yes," replied Agnes, "I noticed it; but doesn't it look cute?"

"Exactly," she replied, laughing; "only most women can't see the cuteness."

"What has happened to make us famous, Mary?" inquired Gabrielle. "I did not think anybody knew of our existence."

"Oh, yes, we are known; and we have been talked about in a disparaging way."

"Who has been talking about us?" the Authoress inquired, going through a little comedy of rolling up her sleeves.

"You know old Mr. Fitzgerald, one of the officers of the society attached to the church for helping the

poor?" said Mary Somerset. "Well, he met me one day on Grand Street, and opened fire on me immediately. 'See here, Miss Somerset,' he began, throwing his head to one side in a comical way that is all his own, 'do you belong to that sewing association in Eldridge Street?' Of course I pleaded guilty immediately, thinking that he might have been deputed by his society to compliment us on our work. 'Well,' he said, 'you can tell Agnes Crystal for me that it would be a great deal more sensible if she would spend her time in making her own clothes, instead of making clothes for people who only go and sell them.' "

"What did you say?" eagerly inquired the Authoress, sniffing the air.

"At first I was somewhat taken aback. His words surprised me more than a little, but as soon as I recovered myself I said, 'Oh, you brute!'"

"You did?" exclaimed the rest of the sewing school in surprise and admiration.

"Yes; but I said it to myself."

"Oh!" drawled the Authoress, in a disappointed way. "Your voice, Mary, is always sweet and low, like the wind of the western sea. Why don't you cultivate a louder tone for special occasions, as, for instance, when you call a man 'a brute'?"

"Did you say anything more to yourself?" Gabrielle asked.

"No; after calling him a brute pianissimo, I then told him out loud that I thought we had done a great deal of good during the last winter. 'You think so, do

you?' he said. 'Well, listen to me. You know the family you assisted last winter, in the basement of the rear house in Chrystie Street?' 'I remember them,' I answered. 'Well,' he continued, drawing himself up like an ogre, and looking down on me, 'I dropped in to see them one day last winter at dinner-time, when I knew they would not expect me, and what do you think they had spread out on the table?' 'Oh, something to eat, probably,' I replied." The sewing school smiled. "'Arrah now, Miss Somerset, but you are very smart. It's true they did have something to eat—something that you didn't have to eat all winter. There was canned asparagrass [how he did lengthen that word!], canned salmon, and canned lobster, do you mind? When did you have canned lobster and canned asparagrass, my young lady, I'd like to know?'"

"You should have told him," interrupted the Author-ess, "that probably their stomachs were so weak from long fasting that they could not retain rough food."

"Perhaps I should have, but he did not give me the chance. He went right on. 'Moreover,' he said, 'one of the members of our society was in the Bowery Bank one day last winter making a deposit. The woman you were relieving stood just in front of him. He was surprised to see her there at all, but he was more surprised when he saw her deposit one hundred dollars in her own name. Just think of it, and us paying for canned lobsters and canned asparagrass.'"

"I gave him a sort of superior look, and said, 'Mr. Fitzgerald, I am much obliged to you for bringing this

matter to my notice. We will investigate the case.' 'Arrah you will!' he said. 'You'll investigate your eye. Just tell Agnes Crystal that she had better do her mother's housework, and not be making ducks and drakes of herself. If we have our hands full in trying to keep from being fooled, it's certain you girls will do more harm than good.' "

"Well," sighed Agnes, "I suppose we are innocents."

"I haven't the least doubt about that," the Authoress rejoined; "but I would not plead guilty to an old crank like Mr. Fitzgerald."

"Say, girls," exclaimed Gabrielle, who had risen from her seat to get something out of her work-basket, "there's old Mr. Stein saying his prayers!"

Lighted candles blazed in the back windows of nearly all the houses opposite, throwing a glare down into the yards, which revealed a number of push-carts and coops for keeping geese and chickens. Through one of the windows an old man with a prayer shawl over his shoulders could be seen standing in prayer. The Authoress was the most interested of the group in Gabrielle's remark, and jumped up immediately from her chair.

"Mr. Stein, did you say? Does he keep a crockery store in Forsyth Street, and has he a small daughter by the name of Rachel?"

"That's the man," Gabrielle assented.

The Authoress shook her clenched fist at him. "He kept me from getting a diamond ring."

Gabrielle looked at her for an explanation.

"I have been promised five diamond rings, and I never yet received one of them."

"Were they engagement rings, Stella?" asked Mary Somerset, who just then joined the group.

"No, indeed, they were not. The first one who promises me an engagement ring will have to keep his word or there will be war. But let me tell you about this particular ring. Just before Christmas every year a number of the girls in my class come to me and whisper into my ear that they are going to give me all sorts of jewelled things for presents. I always discourage them by saying that I don't wish anything, except that they be good children, and then they will be my jewels, as Cornelia, the Roman matron, said. A short while before Christmas Rachel Stein came to me at my desk and whispered, 'Teacher, I'm going to give you such a diamond ring for Christmas.' Instead of discouraging her, as I usually did in such cases, I thought that it would be interesting to see the matter through; so I said, 'Please, Rachel, don't bring me too large a diamond ring, as I am not fond of show.' About two days before the holidays began, little Rachel, after the other children had gone home, came up to me in a bashful kind of a way, and holding up her hand, said, 'Please, teacher.' 'Well, what's the matter, child?' I asked, gathering her to my bosom. 'Mamma,' she answered, sobbing, 'wanted to give you a diamond ring, but papa said no he can't, because it stands on the newspapers that there are six hundred thousand men out of work.'"

"That reminds me of an incident that happened one Christmas when I was teaching down in Rivington Street," said Mary Somerset, after the girls had stopped laughing. "I had two little Jewish girls in my class, and one day the younger of the two shook her hand at me violently, and said, 'Teacher, this girl says that Santy Clothes is her uncle.' The other child jumped up immediately and defended herself by saying, 'Teacher, I only said that Santy Clothes looks like my uncle, 'cause he has such a white beard like him.' To settle things, I asked the girl who was accused to put out her tongue, and then I exclaimed in pretended horror, 'Oh, what made that great black mark on your tongue?' Quick as a flash came the answer, 'Teacher, I forgot to wash my tongue this morning.'"

"What did you say to her?" asked the Authoress.

"Nothing, except not to forget to wash her tongue for the future. Her ingenuity quite overcame me."

Mr. Crystal's voice from the front room, summoning Gabrielle, broke up the party at the window.

"Trim the lamp for us, Gay; it is beginning to smoke," her father said.

Gabrielle trimmed the wick and afterward brought a box of cigars. Mr. Crystal left the table for a moment, and Gabrielle offered the cigars to his partner in the game, John Fulton.

He took one, and at the same time remarked with a smile, "You are a wonderfully good little girl, Gay."

She turned aside as he spoke, and said to herself in a

low, impatient tone of voice, "Oh, compliments are cheap!"

He was putting a lighted match to the end of his cigar, but paused as he caught her whispered words. "Don't you think I mean what I say?" he asked, touching the match to the cigar, and burning his fingers in his distraction.

"Yes, I suppose you mean it as much as you mean anything you say to me."

The tone of her voice startled him. He turned and looked at her, and saw that her eyes were wet. "Why, Gay, have I hurt you?" he asked with a good deal of tenderness.

An uncontrollable sob broke from her. "One doesn't like to be treated always like a little girl," she answered, as she walked away, blinking back the tears.

John Fulton followed her with his eyes as she left the room. "I have unwittingly wounded her," he said to himself, "by calling her a little girl."

Mr. Crystal returned to the table, and the play went on.

"Your luck has gone back on you, Jack," he said, as he won the second game in succession.

But it was distraction and not poor luck that made Jack Fulton play so badly. Never before had there been any misunderstanding between him and Gabrielle. He blamed himself for his stupidity in not having noticed that Gabrielle was really a young woman, and ought not to be spoken to like a child. To him she had remained the same little Gabrielle Crystal, with large,

black eyes shining out from under a big hat, and a wealth of black hair hanging down her back. She was only thirteen when he was twenty. Now she was over nineteen and he was twenty-six. They had lived all these years in the houses adjoining. Both their families had been intimately acquainted. From a childish admiration for John Fulton, who had always been her defender in trouble and consoler in sorrow, Gabrielle had come to love him. Such a thought had never entered into his mind, and so it happened that she passed from girlhood to maidenhood, and blossomed into a lovely young woman, but to him she still had remained "little Gay." Once or twice of late he had looked at her wonderingly for a moment, and seemed to realize that she had become a young woman; but then he would forget all about it a moment after, and go on treating her like a child.

The other members of the quilting party had put aside their needles before Gabrielle came back. She had been bathing her eyes in cold water to blot out all evidence of her tears. Her friends were drinking tea when she joined them.

"Come and sit down by my side," said the Author-ess, making room for her. She took the proffered seat. "Now say your grace after me, 'God—bless—the—man—who—first—invented—tea!'"

Gabrielle only smiled as she reached for the sugar.

"Why don't you do as I tell you?" the Authoress asked.

"Because I don't believe that it was a man who in-

vented tea. I am sure it was a woman. Men get credit for too much."

The Authoress drew in her breath in an attempted whistle, to indicate her surprise.

"That's what comes of reading newspaper accounts of women's rights' speeches! However, Gay, I agree with you that men do get credit for more than they deserve; but in this case the honor belongs to a man, and I will tell you all about it if you keep quiet.

"Once upon a time—a long time ago, as all good stories begin—there was a Chinese nobleman; not like one of the linen washers to the American nation, but a Prince Charming. He was in love with one of the ladies-in-waiting to the Celestial court, 'a little blue pigeon with velvet eyes.' Each afternoon at five o'clock, which was the only time that he could visit her, she was, it seems, afflicted with a violent headache. Everything was tried to give her relief, but in vain. All the medicine-men of the kingdom came to see her, but they failed miserably. The young lover was distracted with grief. He would walk up and down the gardens of the palace, in the hot sunshine and cool moonlight, wondering in agony whether there was not some balm in Gilead which would bring a respite to his best-beloved. One morning while walking in the garden he chanced upon a bird's nest in a mulberry-bush. On examining the nest, he found that one of the little birds was ill. The bird's sufferings appealed to him. He kept a close watch on the nest, and he noticed that about three times a day the mother bird would fly to a far-off field

at the end of the garden, and taking two or three leaves from what was then supposed to be a weed, would steep them in a little rain-water which was in the hollow of a tree next to the nest. After the sun had pretty well heated the water in which the leaves were steeped, the mother bird would then fill her bill with it and give to the sick one to drink. The prince noticed, to his surprise, that the little bird would immediately recover its strength and begin to chirp gayly. In a week's time it was completely revived and just as strong as its brothers and sisters. 'So will my own little bird be cured,' reasoned the nobleman. He forthwith gathered a handful of leaves, steeped them in hot water, and brought the concoction to his lady-love the next afternoon at five-o'clock. The cure was instantaneous. That's how five-o'clock teas came so much into vogue. So you see, Gay," continued the Authoress, "that it was a man who discovered tea, although it's a consolation to know that he would never have known anything about it were it not for a female bird."

"You authoresses make up so many stories," Gabrielle replied, as she raised her cup to her lips, "that one never knows when to believe you. However, even if what you say be true, it still remains a fact that tea is a woman's drink."

The clock struck ten, and the Authoress jumped up from her chair, saying that she must hurry home.

"But before I go, Gay, I must contradict you once more. We have been discussing Dr. Johnson at our literary club this week, and now I remember that he

used to drink about seventeen cups of tea at one sitting. So what you say about tea being a woman's drink don't seem to hold, because he was a most virile man."

"Perhaps he fell under a trolley car and had his legs cut off, which would necessitate his sitting all the time."

"No; he had both his legs, for I saw his picture."

"Well, then, I don't care how manly he was, he must have been a good deal of a woman to drink seventeen cups of tea at one meal."

"Exactly," exclaimed the Authoress; "that's just what I think, that Dr. Johnson must have been more womanish than literary critics ever imagined. I will bring that question up at our next meeting. It's just the kind of a question for an East Side literary club to tear the heart out of."

Agnes accompanied Mary Somerset and the Authoress to the door.

"Did you tell Gay," inquired the Authoress, "that Jack Fulton had taken me to the theatre?"

Agnes nodded her head in assent.

"And did it succeed?"

"Perfectly."

"She has come back to Jack again?"

Agnes nodded.

"Oh, my!" the Authoress exclaimed,

" 'Love is blind, and lovers cannot see
The pretty follies that themselves commit.'"

I suppose it will not be necessary for me to inveigle Jack into taking me to the theatre again; will it?"

"No," replied Agnes; "I think you had better not."

"Whatever you say—only it was fun."

"Come, Stella," called Mary Somerset, who was out on the sidewalk; "it's getting late;" and they vanished down the cold, deserted street.

The clock striking ten put an end to the chess-playing. Gabrielle had remained in the back room sipping another cup of tea. John Fulton asked for her, and Mrs. Crystal called her into the room.

"What's the matter, Gay?" her mother asked; "you look as if you were sleepy."

"So I am," she answered, reaching out her hand to John Fulton without looking up at him.

He took the outstretched hand, and held it for a moment in his grasp, until he forced her to raise her eyes. When she did so she saw a look of pain in his. It was their first quarrel; and never before had he looked at her like that. The anger in her voice and the tears in her eyes had done their work. They made him realize for the first time that she had ceased to be a child. When she noticed how pained he seemed, she felt sorry for her anger, and tried to show him by a quick look that she had repented; and the bad "quarter of an hour" was over for both.

CHAPTER XIII.

*"Heartily know,
When half-gods go,
The gods arrive."*

THE next time Horace Bryce visited the Crystals Gabrielle chanced not to be at home. He could not conceal his disappointment. He began to suspect that some change had come over her. She had not sent him by John Fulton any invitation to call. After thinking the matter over for a day or two, he concluded to write to her. He sat down at his desk and began the letter, but before he had made much progress word was brought into the office that John Fulton's mother had died the previous night.

At the news Horace Bryce tore up the unfinished note, and determined to go down that evening to offer his condolence to John Fulton, feeling certain that he would meet Gabrielle.

When he was ushered by Agnes Crystal into the room where the mother lay, he found John Fulton leaning over the body and Gabrielle standing opposite to him. After offering his sympathy to his bereaved friend, he reached out his hand over the coffin and shook hands with Gabrielle. He noticed that she seemed very nervous, and her hand trembled in his.

She did not raise her eyes to look at him. Once during the evening he tried to get a chance to have a long talk with her, and told her of his great disappointment at missing her the last time he called. She apologized and said that it was an accident, that she did not expect him, and then she excused herself and left him. He made no other attempt that evening to come to an understanding with her.

Two days afterward John Fulton's mother was buried. Horace Bryce, with several others from the post-office, attended the funeral. The day was cold and saddening, and the long ride to the cemetery was a dreary one. The wind drove the fine dust along the road in clouds, whitening the unbroken line of coaches which were following four hearses on their way to the "city of the dead." The narrow creek which ran for a long way near the road looked cold and black as the wind roughed the water.

It took but a short time to pile up the earth on the coffin, and the cemetery was so damp that the mourners were glad to hurry back to their carriages.

Horace Bryce, noticing that Gabrielle was struggling, without success, to fasten the top button of the long winter cloak which enveloped her, came over to her side, and slipping off his glove, offered to help her. She made one more desperate effort when she noticed him coming, but only succeeded in bruising her numbed finger. She submitted to his good offices, but in a way which plainly showed him that she would rather have avoided him. He blushed as he drew on his glove

again, and remarked somewhat sadly, "You seem to have changed considerably in your manner of acting toward me of late, Miss Crystal. I hope I have not unconsciously offended you in any way."

She had come out from among the graves and was standing by the roadside. The chill wind swept the dead leaves down the little narrow alleys between the graves and out into the roadway, some of them clinging to the fur trimming around the bottom of her coat. She paused as he spoke to her, but made no answer.

"You seem to have changed toward me of late," he repeated, digging his cane into the earth.

"How?" she asked, playing with the withered leaves which blew against the ferrule of her umbrella.

"I feel that you are not as glad to see me as you were before," he replied. "In fact, that you have even purposely avoided me."

His words did not denote anger, but pain. Gabrielle noticed this, and it helped to take away her courage. "If he would only get angry," she reasoned, "it would be more easy to meet him."

Her voice was low and apologetic as she answered him. "I was ill, you know, the first time you called; on the second occasion I was not at home."

He drew a little nearer to her and said, with great seriousness: "I don't know whether you are aware of it or not, Miss Crystal, but you have played a most important part in my life since the day I first met you climbing the mountains."

The remembrance of his many kindnesses came back

to her and added to her misery. She felt tempted for a moment to run away to her carriage, but that would be too cowardly. She was beginning to see now how right Agnes had been in her surmises.

"That is why," he continued, as he snapped off a piece of the dry branch of a tree that was hanging over his head, "this evident change in your way of acting toward me has hurt me so much."

"I assure you, Mr. Bryce," she replied, "I did not wish to do anything that might give you pain. I am not forgetful of all the kindness you have shown me."

"Since the very first day we met, Miss Crystal," he went on, not seeming to regard what she had said, "I have admired and more than liked you. I was just beginning to fancy that you cared something for me, when suddenly your whole manner toward me changed—for what reason I cannot imagine. A graveyard is a poor place to say what I feel I must say, but you will forgive my speaking here when I tell you that I cannot stand any longer the pain of suspense. The fact is, Miss Crystal, that I love you."

This unexpected declaration came so quickly that Gabrielle was for the moment stunned. She gathered her thoughts together after a little, and then she felt so weak that she was sure she would faint. She looked about the graveyard helplessly, until suddenly, through the leafless bushes, she caught sight of the pale, sad face of John Fulton, as he was stooping over his mother's grave to pluck a few white roses from a cross of flowers which rested on it. The sight strengthened

her. The rallied color ran through her white cheeks, and she felt her heart strong within her. She was surprised at her own coolness as she spoke.

"I never suspected for an instant, Mr. Bryce, that you had for me any more than an ordinary friendship. Your words are a great surprise to me, and I have only one answer to make. I am thankful for your kindness and feel honored by your friendship, but anything like love is out of the question."

Each word was uttered slowly and distinctly. The sight of John Fulton had determined her to finish forever a disagreeable task.

"Some weeks back," he answered in a tone of remonstrance, "I judged from your apparent gladness at seeing me whenever we met, that you did think something of me. I had hoped that one day you might come to love me."

"I am sorry, then," she answered, "if anything in my manner caused you to have such an idea. I am sure I never intended to convey it."

Agnes's hand waving in the air attracted the attention of Gabrielle.

"My sister is beckoning me," she said.

They started to walk back to the carriages. The wind moaned dismally in the tree-tops, and tore the few remaining dead leaves from the branches, flicking them now and then against their faces. For several moments both were silent as they hurried along the road. When they came opposite to where Gabrielle's carriage was standing, they found that the way was blocked by a

large, white slab, which had fallen from its pedestal. He reached out his hand to her to help her over it. She took the proffered hand, and when she was safely over the fallen tombstone, he held her hand for a moment and asked, in a bitter tone, "Have you avoided me these last few weeks because of some one else of whom you are growing fonder?"

The question angered Gabrielle, and she flashed back, "I do not think you have a right to ask me such a question. I consider it insulting, and I refuse to answer it or to listen to any more of that kind of talk."

Horace Bryce had been quick enough to see the change that came over Gabrielle when she caught sight of John Fulton. Immediately he concluded that the reason of her behavior toward himself must be a growing fondness for John Fulton. They walked on a few steps farther, and then he turned to her and apologized.

"I am sorry that I have angered you. In fact, I have been very stupid to talk to you the way I did in such a dreary place and on such a bleak day. I really do not deserve anything better than a refusal for acting so stupidly. So let's blot to-day's work off the slate altogether," he added with an attempt at gayety, "and for the time being we can continue good friends."

"But, Mr. Bryce," she protested, "I mean my answer to be final."

He silenced her by saying, "Hush, they will hear you!"

John Fulton rode back from the cemetery in company with Mrs. Crystal and her two daughters.

"I cannot sleep at home to-night," he said; "it would be too lonesome. I will pack up some things in a valise and go uptown and stop with my cousins for a few days. I am sorry to leave the old house, but I cannot bear to live there any longer. As soon as I am able to settle things, I shall probably board somewhere near my relations."

Every word he uttered was like the stroke of a hammer beating on Gabrielle's heart. Fortunately for her the thick black veil she wore concealed the pallor of her cheeks.

The sense of loneliness was heavy upon John Fulton as he packed his valise in the rooms from which his mother's dead body had been carried out that day. The old house in which he had lived for so many years, and from which both his father and mother had been buried, had a charm for him. It was hard to leave it, but he knew that to remain there, even if it were practicable, would only add to his sorrow.

He took supper with the Crystals, and after finishing a cigar with Mr. Crystal started uptown.

A few days later he returned to the rooms to take away whatever he prized and to dispose of the rest. When he came to say good-bye to Gabrielle, he whispered, "I hope you have forgiven me for offending you the other evening." The rest of the family were standing about, and Gabrielle controlled her feelings, asking *his* forgiveness for being so ill-tempered.

So John Fulton, having lived most of his life in Eldridge Street, broke away from his friends, and went

to live in a furnished room higher up in the city. And having laid his mother away in the grave, he took up his rather cheerless life again, starting out every morning in the rain or the shine with his brown leather bag full of letters.

After his day's work was over he would return to his home, if a furnished room be a home, and read and smoke until the cuckoo clock on the mantel—a favorite of his mother's—would warn him of the lateness of the hour. He lived on in this way, sunk in great gloom, for several weeks, occasionally visiting his cousins, who resided in the vicinity, when suddenly there began to spring up within him a longing to go down and see the Crystals.

To meet them again would be a great joy. He would sit at night alone in his room and think of them, always with great fondness. But most of all he would see in the bluish-gray smoke of his cigar, as it circled in a cloud about him, the figure of a young girl with big, black eyes, who would suddenly, as the cloud of smoke shifted, become transformed into a full-grown young woman, standing by a chess-table with those same black eyes flooded with tears.

You get the right perspective when you draw away somewhat from a picture. John Fulton's separation from Gabrielle Crystal was now beginning to furnish him with the right perspective. He had shortly before he left Eldridge Street awakened to the fact that Gabrielle was no longer a child. Sitting alone in his room during those quiet winter nights, and seeing her in the

waving cloud of smoke above him, he began to have a longing for her such as he had never felt before. So strange a thing is that which men call love. Separate two ardent lovers for a sufficient length of time, and in a majority of cases they will learn to forget each other. Then again bring about a separation between two who are only friends, and the separation will ripen the friendship into love. Indeed, the human heart is ever an anomaly, and in *affaires du cœur* it is impossible to lay down any law.

A sentimental poet has embalmed his feelings for us in these, if not great, at least well-known lines :

“ From sport to sport they hurry me,
To banish my regret ;
And when they win a smile from me,
They fancy I forget.”

No doubt there are cases such as this verse describes, but as a rule such “ constancy lives in realms above.” Even the poet who wrote these lines learned to forget and marry another, so we are told. Wise mothers know well that there is a limited supply of such fidelity on this green earth. An extended trip to “ fields and pastures new” is a famous way to make daughters forget an old but undesirable love. Shakespeare, who knew the hearts of men and women, has left this record :

“ Men have died from time to time, and
worms have eaten them, but not for love.”

It seems, therefore, that in this matter of love little

can be counted on as certain. The separation of two lovers may end their love, or again separation may be like the wind which fans the spark into a flame.

It happened in this latter way with John Fulton. The new image of Gabrielle Crystal, which kept coming up before him, charmed him. He found himself growing strangely fond of her, and a great longing to see her took hold of him. He looked at his clock one evening as he finished his third cigar, and saw that it was after one o'clock, and that he had been dreaming for hours about her. As he wound up his alarm-clock he made two resolutions.

One was to give over this dreaming and to retire earlier, so as to preserve his strength for his hard work ; the second resolution was to go down the next evening to see the Crystals. He kept the second resolution.

CHAPTER XIV.

*y dear, I don't think that I thought of much
Before we knew each other, I and you ;
And now, why, John, your least, least finger touch
Gives me enough to think a summer through."*

IT was near the middle of December. The bread-winners who left their homes on the East Side at seven o'clock in the morning were gladdened by the bright winter's sunshine. When their employers, living uptown, stepped out of their houses at nine o'clock the sun had been blotted out by the great clouds which the winds had whipped up suddenly from all parts of the sky. One would not have had to be a prophet or the son of a prophet to foretell that snow would fall before evening. Toward midday the air grew milder, and early in the afternoon the snow came.

The large flakes were driven about like mad by the wind. Now they were dashed almost to the ground, and again they were swept far above the tops of the highest tenements in eddies, like autumn leaves in autumn winds. By night the snow lay deep upon everything. That same multitude, "which no man can number," that had started out to work in the early morning, was now returning. The snow acted upon them like an elixir. One would never have imagined

from their activity and their buoyant spirits, as they surged like waves through the side streets, that they had just finished a hard day's work. The unrestrained laughter of young girls, the shouts of children at play, the jangled music of the sleigh-bells, the frantic yells of the men on the snow-plough made a discordant but merry uproar.

A little after seven o'clock the same evening, as a downtown train of the Elevated Road, wrapped in steam and falling snow, came to a halt at the Houston Street station, John Fulton stepped off, and reaching the street, turned toward the east and crossed the Bowery, meeting a friend who was going in the same direction. The pace John Fulton set must have been a smart one, for in a short time his friend remarked, "You must be in a hurry, Jack, you walk so fast."

"Oh, is that a fact?" he answered; "I did not notice that I was walking very briskly. I suppose it must be the air and the snow refreshing me."

They walked along a little farther at a more reasonable pace, but gradually John Fulton increased his speed unconsciously, and when they arrived at the house in which the Crystals lived his companion was out of breath.

"I wouldn't care to walk many miles with one of you letter-carriers," the young man remarked as he left John Fulton at the door.

But it was not because he was a letter-carrier that John Fulton hurried over the snow-covered streets, nor was it because of any exhilarating effect in the

snow itself. It was the love that had just begun to spring up in his heart.

At the same moment that John Fulton laid his hand on the bell to ring it, the door was opened, and Gabrielle and Agnes, dressed ready for walking, appeared in the hallway. As she opened the door, Gabrielle involuntarily uttered a little cry of delight, and then, covered with blushes, fell back. Agnes came forward and took the outstretched hand of the young man, thus giving Gabrielle time to recover from her embarrassment.

"I grew so lonesome living uptown," John Fulton said, as he took Gabrielle's hand, "that I made up my mind last night that the best thing for me to do to shake off the continued blues from which I was suffering was to come down to see you; and now with my usual luck I have chosen the very evening you are going out."

"Oh, no; we are not going out!" Gabrielle exclaimed, as if the idea had never entered into their heads. There was a slight tremor in her voice, caused by a fear that he would not care to remain, lest he might cause them some inconvenience.

"Agnes and I were only going down to Division Street to the milliner's to look at some hats," Gabrielle explained. "She wishes to make me a present of a new one for Christmas, and she says that I am such a crank about my hats, that to be sure of not destroying the peace of the family at the blessed time of Christmas, she had better take me with her. As there is no bill of removal on the milliner's store, I guess it will be

safe to wait till to-morrow evening ; so please," she added, coaxingly, " don't imagine that you are forcing us to break any engagement."

" By all means come upstairs, Jack," Agnes added. " It is infinitely more pleasant entertaining young men who are suffering from the blues than buying new hats."

He shook the snow from his overcoat, and they started up the short flight of stairs.

" Mamma and papa will be so glad to see you," Gabrielle naïvely remarked. She made no mention of her own feelings in the matter. When she came to the door she knocked on it, just as if she were a visitor. Her father, who was reading the evening newspaper in the parlor, arose and opened the door.

" Get the chess ready !" she exclaimed.

Her father looked at her in surprise, and asked " What brings you back so soon ?" Just then John Fulton appeared, and Mr. Crystal, who had been slow in comprehending his daughter's words, extended his hand to his visitor, remarking with great friendliness, " You are mighty welcome, Jack ; we have greatly missed you."

" So the girls were good enough to say," he replied as he took off his coat and handed it to Gabrielle ; " and I have missed you also. Living in a furnished room uptown is not like living in your mother's house downtown. I have had many a lonesome hour since I left Eldridge Street."

" Well, then, you ought to come down here often," Mr. Crystal replied ; " and perhaps visiting us may

make you happier, as it certainly will us. I miss that game of chess, and as for Gay there, as soon as she finishes her lightning grace before each meal she proposes the same question every time, 'I wonder when Jack will come down?' "

"Oh, no, papa!" interrupted Gabrielle, blushing; "not three times a day."

"Yes, three times a day," he insisted, and Gabrielle ran out of the room to hide her blushes, and to tell her mother that a welcome visitor had arrived.

John Fulton noticed Gabrielle's red cheeks with pleasure. It made him happy with a new kind of happiness to hear that she had been thinking so constantly of him. Mrs. Crystal came into the room, and the conversation turned on John Fulton's dead mother and his own life uptown.

As soon as the chance presented itself Mr. Crystal produced the chess-men and ordered Gabrielle to clear off the table for the game. She made a feeble little protest, saying that it was so long since they had last seen Jack, that it would be more pleasant for him and for all to have a chat, and to leave the playing of chess for another evening.

"Tut, tut, child," her father answered, "don't be silly; Jack didn't come down here to listen to your prattle; he came especially for a game of chess."

John Fulton smiled across at Gabrielle, to tell her that her father was wrong. He would have been more pleased if Mr. Crystal had made no mention of playing, but he did not have the courage to say so, except to

Gabrielle, with his eyes. He drew his chair therefore up to the table and listlessly began the game.

Gabrielle took a seat in the corner of the room, in the shadow, where she could watch his face. Now and then she stole a hurried glance at him. Once, when he was playing at the same game, their eyes met, and from his look she saw that he was tired of playing.

A little while afterward a ball of worsted came rolling across the floor and struck his foot under the table. He understood immediately that it was intended as a message. He stooped and picked it up and brought it over to her.

"What's the matter?" inquired Mr. Crystal, impatiently, ignorant that there was another little game being played in his parlor besides the game of chess.

"I let my ball of worsted fall, papa," explained Gabrielle innocently, "and it rolled across the room to Jack, and he kindly brought it back to me."

"Well, well, I never saw you better, Gay. I pity the poor man who marries you. Come along, Jack; you always spoiled her by humoring her too much."

"You are tired of playing, aren't you?" Gabrielle asked in a low tone of voice while her father was speaking.

"Yes, very," he answered, as he reached her the ball of worsted; "but I don't see how I am to get out of it."

"Leave it to me, then," she said.

"Hurry up, Jack," broke in Mr. Crystal again, "and don't let that little ninnyhammer keep you talking."

On this second invitation John Fulton came back quickly to the table.

"Now, as long as you disturbed the game, Gay," remarked her father, "suppose you take these keys and bring me the box of cigars that are in the second drawer of the bureau. They are a new brand, Jack, and I want you to tell me what you think of them."

Gabrielle took the keys and brought the cigars. When she handed the box to John Fulton he playfully pressed her hand against it, pretending to hurt her, and looked up into her eyes. It was one of those movements which lovers understand so well. She thought of the last time she had offered him a box of cigars, and how full of bitterness and sadness her heart had then been. Things had now taken a turn. She was not slow to see that a great change had come over him. She saw the possibility of her hopes being realized, and she was very happy. In the giving and taking of that cigar Gabrielle, with a woman's instinct, understood that he was beginning at last to love her. After she had supplied the smokers she slipped quietly out to join her mother, who was in the back room.

"I think it's an awful shame, mamma, the way papa monopolizes Jack. I can see Jack does not want to play chess any longer. He is continually yawning, and there is a bored look in his face, as if he was sorry he came to see us."

"Have a little patience, dear; they will be through shortly."

"No, they won't!" Gabrielle replied angrily. "You

know how long papa plays. If he is losing, he always wants 'Just one more game for revenge;' and if he is winning, he always wants 'One more game for the championship of Eldridge Street,' or 'Just one game for the championship of the ward,' and he will keep on playing until it's so late that Jack won't have a minute to talk to us."

Mrs. Crystal smiled at the portrayal of her husband, recognizing how true Gabrielle's description was.

"I suppose, then, you want me to go in and put an end to the game?"

"Yes, I wish you would," Gabrielle answered. "If I ask papa to stop playing, he will call me a little ninnyhammer, whatever that means, and tell me not to bother him."

Mrs. Crystal went quietly into the room where the players were. With feigned surprise she exclaimed to her husband, "Oh, *bon thé café!*"—making use of a French Canadian expression for *bonté divine*, which pious people do not like to use—"you are very greedy, it seems to me, keeping Jack all to yourself." She made a movement as if to clear the chess-men from off the table, but her husband protected them with his arm, and pleaded to finish the game, which he won easily.

In a few moments John Fulton and Gabrielle were sitting in front of the fire chatting merrily.

"I wish you and your mother and Agnes would take a run up to see me some evening," he said; "I think I have chairs enough for all of you."

"We'll be delighted to go," she answered, "even if

we have to stand all the time or to sit on the window-sill. Besides, we might be able to fix up your room a little for you and make a few ornaments for it."

"You would be surprised to see how well it looks now," he answered, in the blundering way of a man; "my cousin, that young woman whom you met at my mother's funeral, has arranged everything in very good taste."

Gabrielle sank back in her chair, somewhat disappointed, and then it dawned upon him how he had blundered in giving her the information. "But if you were to come up," he added quickly, hoping to take the sting out of what he had said, "you could easily suggest many improvements, I am sure."

"That's base flattery, Jack; you don't mean a word of it. You just said that because you noticed I was not able to conceal my disappointment."

"Well, perhaps," he admitted slowly; "but flattery was not my motive. I wanted to impress upon you that it would have been more satisfactory to me to have you arrange my room than to have anybody else in the whole wide world do it." His voice sounded sweet in her ears. "You do not believe that is flattery, do you, Gay?" he asked.

"No," she answered in a whisper; "but you don't think that it was wrong of me to show my disappointment when you told me that your cousin had already fixed your room, do you? I know that she has a greater right than I have to do anything for you."

"She has nothing of the kind. I'd rather please you than a whole army of cousins."

Mrs. Crystal, who had gone out of the room, just then came back, and Gabrielle turned to her mother, saying, "Jack has just been inviting all of us up to see his bachelor's quarters. We will go, won't we?"

"Oh, certainly, if he wants us."

"He says he does; isn't that sufficient?"

"I am anxious to have you all come up to my little home, so as to show you a new crayon of my mother which I have had made. I want to hear your opinion about it."

"We will certainly go, and just as soon as you wish us," Mrs. Crystal answered.

"It must be good fun to live in bachelor's quarters," Gabrielle remarked, her eyes brightening at the thought of the visit.

"It may appear so, but I can assure you that I find it anything but pleasant. I understand now why men who live in bachelor's quarters, as you call them, have that unhappy, furnished-room look about them."

They sat for a long time before the fire, chatting about many things which had been of interest to them in the days gone by.

CHAPTER XV.

*"To each his suff'rings ; all are men,
Condemn'd alike to groan—
The tender for another's pain,
Th' unfeeling for his own."*

GABRIELLE had come home from work in time to have her dinner with her mother and Agnes. Mr. Harkins had given her a half holiday, as he was going out of the city and had nothing particular for her to do.

When the dinner was over Agnes announced to Gabrielle that she had promised to visit that afternoon several poor families. Gabrielle immediately declared her intention of accompanying her sister.

Agnes led the way to a rear house at the lower end of the street in which they lived. When they had gone up two flights of stairs Agnes knocked on a door, and a small boy responded. On a cot in the kitchen a woman lay dying. She had been ill for a long time, and Agnes Crystal had been assiduous in her attentions to her, bringing food and clothes, and in many ways making the last days of the sick woman peaceful and happy.

"I am near the end now," the dying woman gasped as the girls sat down beside her, "and I am well satisfied to go."

"You will not suffer much longer, I think," answered Agnes, leaning over and fixing the pillow under her head.

"I am ready to go as soon as God calls me," the sick woman replied, her eyes turning toward the ceiling as she made an act of resignation to the will of God.

"There is only one thing that worries me."

"What is that?" Agnes asked anxiously.

"It's the boy," she whispered, pointing to the young lad, who stood looking out of the window. "He will have no one but an old aunt to watch over him after I am gone, and I am afraid that she will not be able to manage him."

Agnes hastened to comfort her, telling her not to worry.

"I could die more gladly, Miss Crystal, if I thought you would keep a watch over him, and see that he goes to Mass and keeps away from wicked companions. You are the only one that can influence him now. I know that from the way he talks about you."

"Well, if that is your only worry," Agnes replied, "don't let it bother you any more. I shall be delighted to do all I can for him."

"Thank God!" the woman exclaimed, as she knit her fingers together fervently; "I am ready to die now."

The two girls remained a while longer with the suffering woman, and then left her to go up a flight of stairs to see a sick child.

When they were gone the dying woman called her

son to her bedside, and resting her sick head upon her emaciated hand, said to him, slowly and solemnly, "I am dying, Eddie."

The boy's face grew whiter than the stained wall of the room.

"No, you're not, mother," he protested; "you'll be better to-morrow."

"Come nearer to me, and give me your hand," she whispered, not seeming to be conscious of his interruption.

He sat on the side of the bed, and placed his hand in hers.

"You are not going to die, mother," he repeated. "Don't you remember, you were bad like this once before, and you got better?"

"Yes; but it's all over with me this time. And before I die I want to say one thing to you." She paused for a few moments to gain strength, and then continued: "Never forget that young girl, Eddie; she has helped to make your mother's dying days happy."

The young lad now realized for the first time that he was to lose his mother. All the trouble he had given her, his wayward and careless actions, now came back to him, and bowing his head on his mother's breast, he wept bitterly.

"Say, mother," he sobbed, "I didn't do right by you, and I'm sorry for it. I wish I could take it all back."

His mother tenderly brushed the hair from off his forehead and answered: "I forgive you, Eddie, for every-

thing you ever did that was wrong. You've been more foolish than roguish. Keep out of bad company when I'm dead and gone, go to Mass every Sunday, and promise me that if ever you get a chance to do a good turn for that young girl you'll do it for my sake."

He put up his hand above his head as she finished speaking, and began solemnly, "Mother, I hope I'll never have a day's luck—"

His mother raised her eyes, and seeing the outstretched hand, caught at it frantically, exclaiming, "Don't swear, my child ; just say you'll do it for my sake, and I'll be satisfied."

The oath remained unsworn, and the boy made the promise as his mother directed.

While this sad scene between mother and son was being enacted, a comedy was taking place on the floor above. Often comedy and tragedy are separated by but a flight of stairs in a tenement-house.

Gabrielle and Agnes had not been long in the room where the sick child was lying, when there was a knock at the door, and on its being opened two women entered. One was rather elderly and dressed in black, something after the fashion of a nun; the other was a young lady, rather aristocratic than good-looking.

In a bedroom off the kitchen lay the child whom Agnes Crystal had come to visit. She had been in Agnes's class in Sunday-school, and Agnes visited her nearly every day.

The elderly woman, after talking for a few moments

to the suffering child, turned her attention to the two girls.

"Are you true seekers of Christ?" she asked Agnes.

Gabrielle was so amused by this question that she walked over to the window and looked out so as to hide a smile. She remembered that when Agnes was only ten years of age the old sexton used to have to come up to the altar after the evening devotions were over and almost tear her away. Gabrielle therefore found it amusing to hear Agnes asked if she were "a true seeker of Christ."

While the elderly woman was catechising Agnes, the younger one began questioning Gabrielle.

"Do you live in this house?" she asked, shaking a perfumed handkerchief.

"No," Gabrielle answered; "not in this house, but I live on this block."

"Do you? Well, then, you must know this neighborhood very well."

"I ought to; I was born in this street."

"Were you?" the young lady asked in surprise.

Gabrielle bowed her head.

"I suppose there must be a goodish lot of misery in this vicinity?"

Gabrielle admitted that there was considerable.

The young woman let her eyes travel about the poor little room and then out to the small, unswept yard and the fire-escapes of the front houses, laden with old clothes and rubbish.

"No doubt these people bring upon themselves much of their misery and poverty."

As she remained looking out of the window while she hazarded this opinion Gabrielle did not feel obliged to make any answer, and so kept her peace, quietly studying the elegant young woman, with whom she was not much pleased.

"I understood you to say that you lived at present in this street."

Gabrielle acknowledged for the second time that she did. The young lady soothed her offended nostrils with a bottle of smelling salts which she carried concealed in her handkerchief.

"Well, from the way you dress and your appearance," she said, "I don't think that you are suffering from poverty."

Gabrielle almost boiled over at this point, but for Agnes's sake she held her tongue.

The young woman opened her pocketbook and began fumbling in it.

"She is going to give us tickets for soup," exclaimed Gabrielle, in horror, turning to Agnes.

"Don't mind her," Agnes answered; "she is very young."

The "daughter of the rich" drew out of her pocketbook half a dozen railroad tickets, and handing them to Gabrielle, said: "Two of these are for yourself and your sister. I wish you would give the others to girls with whom you are acquainted in this neighborhood. The tickets will bring you to my summer home, where

I will have refreshments for all of you, and for some others whom I have invited. I am sure you will enjoy yourselves better than you ever did in your lives. I wish, too, that you would practise singing 'The Star-Spangled Banner' and 'My Country, 'tis of Thee.' I will present to every girl as a souvenir a beautiful card with 'My Country, 'tis of Thee' engraved on it. However," she added, as an afterthought, "I wish you would give the tickets to nice, clean girls like yourself. I could not possibly receive some of the girls I have seen around here."

Gabrielle took the tickets, and as soon as she had them safely in her hand she moved toward the stove. She quietly lifted off one of the covers, and deliberately tearing up the tickets, dropped them into the fire.

The donor of the tickets looked at her in amazement, unable to comprehend the action or find words to express herself.

Gabrielle, however, did not remain long silent. When she had drawn the cover over the fire again she turned about, and facing the young lady, exclaimed angrily, "You may be poor before you die, just as we are. If so, I hope you will be made to feel, as you have made me feel, the bitterness of being poor."

The young lady listened, her eyes big with wonder. Finally she found her speech, and answered, "I don't see what right you have to get angry. I merely offered you an opportunity for a day's enjoyment. If you don't wish to accept my invitation, you are free to refuse it."

"Yes ; you did offer me the chance of a day's enjoyment," cried Gabrielle, "and you did it in as patronizing and humiliating a manner as was possible. Now, I would like you to remember, in case we ever meet again, that while we are poor, we are not paupers, and that you have no right to come down here and patronize us. Please don't imagine that because people live in tenement-houses they are brutes, and necessarily devoid of all delicacy of feeling."

"I am sorry I did not offer the tickets to your sister instead of to you," answered the charitably inclined young woman with as much dignity as she could assume. "She is a great deal more ladylike."

The sentence ended in a sarcastic tone, which only served to inflame Gabrielle the more.

"I know she is, and it's precisely because of her that I protest so strongly against your manner. My sister has done more hard work, lost more sleep, and risked her life more times in visiting people with contagious diseases than a dozen like you would in a lifetime. And when she goes to see sick people she does not carry a bottle of smelling-salts with her to remind them that there is a bad odor in their rooms."

The young woman who had come to distribute railroad tickets did not relish this abuse, so, together with the older woman who accompanied her, she hurried to the door, stopping long enough to tell Gabrielle that she considered her a very impertinent and ill-bred girl.

After the door was closed Agnes sank into a chair, exclaiming, "Well, Gay, you *are* a cyclone ! Really,

I thought you would scratch her face and pull her hair before you stopped."

Gabrielle took out her handkerchief, and wiping the perspiration from her forehead, answered, "I couldn't help it. I was full of the subject, and did not try to stem the torrent. I have no respect for charity which is prompted by vanity and curiosity."

After Agnes had administered to the wants of the sick child she and Gabrielle started to go. When they reached the last landing they found the young boy whose mother was dying waiting for them. His eyes were red with weeping and his face tear-stained.

"I just wanted to tell you, Miss Crystal," he said, "that if ever I can do you a favor, I'm willing to do it, even if it costs me my life."

Agnes was very much touched by his words and his earnest manner.

"Be a good boy to your mother while she lives," she answered, placing her hand on his shoulder; "that is all I want."

"I will for sure," he replied, his eyes filling up; "only I wish I had begun sooner."

CHAPTER XVI.

*"Good-night, good-night ! parting is such sweet sorrow,
That I shall say good-night till it be'morrow."*

THE next week Mrs. Crystal and Gabrielle paid a visit to John Fulton in his new home. Gabrielle's sharp eyes saw many chances for improvement ; a picture here, a scarf there would give a bit of life and color to the room.

"Your cousins wouldn't feel offended, Jack, if I made you a few ornaments, would they ?" Gabrielle asked when she had finished a careful survey of the room, and noted what, to her eyes, were its deficiencies.

John Fulton looked at her with a mild protest in his eyes.

"My cousins are very affable people," he replied.

"Oh, I didn't mean that ! I simply would not like to interfere with their plans. Perhaps they intend to make further changes in the room."

"I can assure you that their work of ornamentation is finished, and if you see any place where improvement can be made, you are at liberty to make it. However, I don't wish you to waste your time and injure your eyes sewing at night for me."

Gabrielle's only answer was a toss of the head.

"If the sewing school would care to donate anything

elaborate for the ornamentation of my apartment," he said, "I might be prevailed upon to accept it."

"The sewing school only works for the poor," she answered.

"But I belong to the poor."

"I know it, and you will be dependent on my charity."

"I accept," he replied, bowing in mock humility. "I will put up a notice over my door, 'Sewing schools and cousins need not apply.'"

The conversation went on in this strain, Mrs. Crystal in the meantime turning the leaves of a photograph album. Something in John Fulton's tone of voice attracted her attention. She saw, to her great surprise, that he was talking to Gabrielle in a manner different from that in which he had ever before conversed with her.

Mrs. Crystal kept turning the pages of the album, looking at the photographs without seeing them. When she had finished she began over again. By the time she was half way through the album she realized that John Fulton was in love with her daughter. This knowledge came to her with a shock. She was not yet ready to part with Gabrielle, and she did not enjoy the idea of anybody being in love with her. It is true, she was pleased that it was John Fulton and not another. She acknowledged to herself that he had all the qualities which a good mother could wish for in her daughter's husband. But at present only one thought possessed her, and that was that she did not wish to lose Gabrielle.

For this reason the visit ended more abruptly than it would have otherwise. Gabrielle had not said half enough when her mother announced that it was time to go home.

A little later, when they were rumbling along in a horse-car, Gabrielle pictured in sombre colors John Fulton's lonesome life.

"I know he feels terrible, sitting night after night alone in his room," she said, with great pity in her voice. "He misses us very much."

"Hasn't he his cousins living near him?" her mother asked coldly.

"Yes; but they don't come to see him often, and besides I think he is more at home with us than with them."

"I cannot see how that is; we are only friends, and they are his relatives."

"I know," Gabrielle answered; "but sometimes friends can be dearer even than one's own relations."

"Did he ever tell *you* that you were dearer to him than his relations?" her mother inquired, turning directly toward her.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Gabrielle, blushing violently. "I didn't mean that; I simply meant—well, I was speaking in general."

"Yes; I understand," Mrs. Crystal answered, looking straight ahead through the window opposite.

The car bounded along, and for several moments nothing further was said. They were rapidly getting nearer home, and Gabrielle was anxious to renew the

conversation which her mother had ended so abruptly. The conductor called out the name of the street, and Gabrielle saw that they were very near home. There was no time to be lost, so she began again.

"If Jack thought we would be glad to have him call frequently, I am sure he would avail himself of the privilege and be grateful for it."

"He knows he is always welcome at our house," her mother answered her, with very little interest.

"Yes; but if you were to give him a special invitation and urge him to come, I know he would like it."

"Perhaps if we were to insist on his coming often to see us he might come through courtesy, and at the same time be bored to death at every visit."

"Oh, no; he wouldn't be bored," Gabrielle exclaimed, a little smile playing about her mouth.

"Why," asked her mother, looking at her, "is he so fond of your company as to make that impossible?"

The smile vanished instantly, as the car came to a sudden stop, jolting the passengers.

When Gabrielle recovered her composure she replied: "No; I am not so vain as to think that. But I am sure Jack enjoys an evening with papa about as much as he does with anybody."

"Then you ought to prevail on your father to invite him. You know that I am only too willing to have Jack call as often as he likes, but I wouldn't for the world make it a burden to him."

"No, neither would I," Gabrielle answered; "but I feel that it would not be a burden."

"Yes ; but feelings often lead people astray."

"I know ; but I have more than my feelings to direct me. I judge so from what he said."

"What did he say ?"

"Rivington Street !" cried the conductor, ringing the bell and bringing the car to a stop.

Mrs. Crystal and her daughter hurried out of the car, and made their way to the sidewalk.

Gabrielle did not answer her mother's question, but said, "I'll tell papa how lonesome Jack is, and get him to invite Jack down to see us often."

"Yes ; you could try the experiment, at any rate," her mother replied. "Your father might invite Jack for next Thursday evening. I want you and Agnes to go across town with me that night."

Gabrielle took a deep breath of the cold air. "What could make her mother so contrary ?" she asked herself.

The light in the street was dim, and Mrs. Crystal could smile in safety at her daughter's discomfiture.

Gabrielle walked along quietly thinking. She had nothing more to say. No matter which way she turned she found herself in a *cul de sac*.

"Perhaps," she thought, "I may be able to do something with my father."

And so mother and daughter reached the doorstep in silence.

"I am a much wiser woman to-night than I was this time last night," said Mrs. Crystal the following evening, interrupting her husband as he was reading the newspaper.

The two girls had gone out, and the mother and father were free for an hour's conversation.

Mr. Crystal looked up from his paper and over his glasses at his wife for an explanation.

"I have discovered that Jack Fulton is in love."

"No!" he exclaimed; "you don't tell me."

"Yes; it's a fact."

"And who is the happy young woman?" he asked, growing more interested.

"Could you guess?"

He leaned back in his chair and looked up at the ceiling for a few moments. Then he mentioned the names of several young women.

His wife shook her head.

"Do I know her?" he asked.

"Very well," she answered.

He thought for a little while again and made some random guesses, and then gave up trying.

"Jack Fulton is in love with your daughter," she replied slowly and dramatically.

"What!" he exclaimed, half jumping from his chair.

"He is in love with your daughter," she repeated.

"With Agnes?"

"Agnes is going to enter the convent."

"With Gay?"

"You've guessed it at last."

"Where did you get the information from?" was his next question.

"From my own eyes and ears."

"Did Jack tell you?"

"No ; I found it out last evening by watching him when he was talking to Gay."

"What did he say to her?"

"Nothing in particular, but enough to make me see that he is in love with her."

Mr. Crystal gradually recovered from his surprise, and after hearing all that his wife had to say on the subject, concluded that her judgment was too hasty, and therefore not well founded.

"I cannot imagine Jack falling in love with Gay," he said, after a pause.

"Why, isn't your daughter good enough for him?"

"Yes," he replied, with emphasis ; "she is good enough for the best man living ; but I always expected Jack to marry some older and more serious girl."

"Jack is not so very old," she objected.

"No ; but he is six or seven years older than Gay."

"You were eight years older than I was when we were married."

He took off his glasses, and leaning back in his chair, laughed quietly. After a little he said, "Well, if they are in love, I suppose there is no help for it, and that one day they will marry. We would have to travel far and wide to find a better son-in-law than Jack Fulton."

"But what are *we* going to do if they marry?"

"Give them our blessing, I suppose."

"And what is to become of us?" she asked.

"We will live on to a ripe old age, I hope," he answered, smiling.

His wife's face suddenly became very grave. "Doesn't it worry you to think of how lonesome we shall be with one daughter in the convent and the other married and living away from us?"

A serious look came into his eyes. "I did not think of that," was all he could say.

"Perhaps I had better speak to Gay."

"If you think well of it," he answered. Then he added, "It might be wiser to wait a little longer and find out if Jack is really in love with her."

"It's strange how little faith you have in my judgment!" she exclaimed impatiently.

"I did not mean to question your judgment, but is it not possible that you are mistaken in this matter?"

"No!" she answered, with decision; "I am absolutely certain that Jack is, or at least will be before a month, deeply in love with Gay."

"Then wouldn't it be well to wait another month before taking any action?"

She shook her head hopelessly. "All right, I will wait; but when you are sitting here alone, night after night, and both your children are separated from you, perhaps then you will be sorry I did not act more quickly."

Her voice dropped to a sad key and her eyes were full of tears. The picture she drew did not add to her husband's happiness either. To lose his two children, and both, perhaps, in a short time, was a saddening prospect. He and his wife had become reconciled to the idea of parting with Agnes. They were religious

people, and though a fond father and mother, they regarded as a great blessing their daughter's call to so high a state of life, and were accordingly satisfied. But they were hardly ready to give up Gabrielle. They sat in silence for several moments. Then a thought came into Mr. Crystal's mind that dissipated the gloom which had fallen over him.

"If Jack and Gay do fall in love and get married, why couldn't they live with us?"

"Perhaps they could," she replied; "but an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure."

"But if we are unable to prevent it, would it not be better to accept the situation and stipulate with Jack that he live with us? I am sure he would make no objection."

"He might agree to the proposal, but how long would it last?"

"Always," her husband answered confidently.

"You forget that after the marriage I would be Jack's mother-in-law."

"Well, what of that?"

"Isn't it proverbial that no man can get along with his mother-in-law?"

"With some mothers-in-law, yes," he replied; "but with you—" he stopped and looked at her, a smile in his eyes. Just then the two girls were heard coming up the stairs. "Do whatever you think best," he hastened to add.

"I will wait awhile," she answered.

CHAPTER XVII.

"With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a daughter's heart."

ON a bleak afternoon, in the first week in January, Gabrielle sat in her office busy typewriting. Agnes was standing at the window, alternately talking to her sister or looking out at the park below.

The scene was a dreary one. The leafless trees, with the cold wind cutting through them, the withered grass, the dry fountain full of rubbish, the mounds of piled-up snow at regular intervals decorating the grass-plots, the deserted pavilion used by one of the city's free bands in the summer, and a half dozen cab-drivers walking up and down to warm themselves, make not a cheerful prospect. It was one of those wretched days which are best ended by drawing the curtains as early as possible and lighting the gas.

The attention of Agnes, as she looked out of the window, was attracted by a man and a young woman coming across the park. As the young woman drew nearer she proved to be Clara Harkins.

Finding her father busy talking to several men as she came into his office, Clara nodded to him and made her way to Gabrielle's sanctum, leaving Mr. Parker to join her father. She gave a little cry of delight at seeing

Agnes, exclaiming, "I'm so glad to see you. I did not expect to find you here."

"The day was so blue," Agnes replied, "that I thought Gay would enjoy company, so as soon as mother lay down for her afternoon nod I came away."

"I have been to the theatre," Clara said, as she sat down.

"Is that so?" Gabrielle asked, immediately interested. "What did you see?"

"The 'Twelfth Night,' at Daly's."

"Oh, that must have been lovely! I read in one of the papers that the stage setting was like a dream."

"It was very good," Clara answered wearily; "but I am afraid that I did not enjoy it. I don't think that Mr. Parker spent a very pleasant afternoon either. He is fond of plays, and I believe that I offended him by not sharing his enthusiasm."

"If you don't mind my telling you," Gabrielle said, "I know that Mr. Parker is quite fond of *you*."

A quick flush came into Clara's cheeks. She had reason to believe that what Gabrielle said was only too true. It was hard enough to be thwarted in her desire to enter a convent, but to find a man for whom her father had such unbounded respect growing fond of her was certainly disheartening.

"On what do you base your supposition?" she asked, after a moment's reflection.

"I accidentally overheard snatches of a conversation between Mr. Parker and your father," Gabrielle an-

swered, with some hesitation, as she looked at Clara's burning cheeks.

"What did Mr. Parker say?"

"Are you sure you would care to hear?"

"Very ; I want to be prepared for the worst."

Gabrielle thought for a moment, and then replied : "Well, among other things, Mr. Parker declared that he believed you were the kind of a young woman that would make a man happy. Your father answered that he was glad to hear him say so. Mr. Parker paid you several other compliments, and ended by telling your father that he was considering seriously of taking you for his wife."

"What !" cried Clara, in dismay ; "he surely didn't say that?" The tone of her voice was half angry and half pleading for Gabrielle to deny what she had just said.

Gabrielle, seeing the effect of her words, was sorry she had spoken, and not being able to retract what she had said, held her peace. Gradually the color came back to Clara's face, and she grew calmer.

"I thought it would be better to tell you what I heard," Gabrielle finally said, "so that you might be prepared. I am very sorry if I have done wrong in telling you."

"I would not consider you friendly if you had not told me. I could not control my feelings at your news, but I assure you, Gay, I am very grateful to you for telling me what you heard."

Agnes sat a quiet spectator, her eyes full of pity as she looked at the suffering girl.

"Mr. Parker must feel perfectly confident of my acceptance from the way he spoke to my father," Clara said, after a moment.

"I could not help but admire his assurance," rejoined Gabrielle, "when he said that he was thinking seriously of making you his wife."

"I am not so surprised at that. It is, I believe, from what I have seen of him, quite typical of his character."

"I think he has considerable presumption," Gabrielle declared. "Why, he is a widower, and he's forty-five if he is a day; besides, he's already very bald."

These considerations counted very much with Gabrielle.

"I would not care for him if he were twenty-five and had all his hair," Clara answered.

"I wonder what Mr. Parker thinks a girl is!" exclaimed Gabrielle.

"I don't care so much what Mr. Parker thinks. It's my father's opinion that troubles me. He is very fond of money, and Mr. Parker is a wealthy man."

"I can understand your father's desire to keep you out of the convent, as you are his only daughter," Gabrielle said; "but I think he might leave to you the choice of a husband for yourself."

Clara made no reply, throwing her head back on the soft leather of the chair, and looking up at a bunch of flowers frescoed on the ceiling above.

Agnes, who had remained silent all the time that

Gabrielle and Clara were talking, now joined in the conversation.

"I believe it's a truth, that when one is furthest away from a thing then one is nearest to it."

"Do you mean that with Mr. Parker my cup of misery becomes full, and that things will take a turn?" Clara asked, looking toward Agnes.

"Precisely," Agnes answered.

"I hope so," Clara said doubtfully. Her courage came back a little, and she continued, "Perhaps when I refuse Mr. Parker—that is, if he ever gives me the chance—my father will then think that I am not sound in my mind, and will readily consent to my becoming a nun. He believes that a convent is a refuge for eccentric women."

"If the worst should happen, Miss Harkins," Gabrielle proposed, sarcastically, "and your father should entreat you to marry Mr. Parker, why not offer to compromise and marry Mr. Parker's son, if there is such an individual in existence."

Clara smiled a little at the proposal, replying that Mr. Parker had no son.

The clock in Mr. Harkins's office slowly struck five, and the men who had been talking to him rose to go. Mr. Parker had left shortly before.

Gabrielle put her typewriting machine aside and closed the cover of her roll-top desk.

"There is one consolation, Miss Harkins," she said, as she reached for her hat; "if you should marry Mr. Parker, it will be a greater act of mortification and re-

nunciation for you than even entering a convent. Thus you will get a higher place in heaven by taking an indirect route."

"Let us hope and pray," interrupted Agnes, "that Miss Harkins will be able to reach heaven by the direct way."

"By all means," Clara agreed. "I am not the stuff of which martyrs are made."

Mr. Harkins came to the door to call his daughter. Gabrielle and Agnes bade her good-evening and went downstairs and across the park on their way home.

A few moments later Mr. Harkins and his daughter entered a carriage which was waiting for them at the door and started uptown. Mr. Harkins was not a very tall man, but he carried himself erect, with a military bearing, which made up somewhat for his want of height. He was nearly sixty years of age, but as he dyed his mustache he looked considerably younger. He was what is called "a dapper-looking man." He had a smart business air about him, a quick step, and a ruddy complexion. He looked a little apoplectic, but that only served to make him seem to have more vitality.

When he had settled himself comfortably in the soft cushions of the carriage he took from his pocket the evening paper, and hurriedly ran his eye over the headings, dwelling a few moments on Wall Street news. After that he laid the paper on his knee, and turning toward his daughter, said, "Mr. Parker told me that you were both at Daly's this afternoon."

"Yes ; Mr. Parker came to the house this morning and asked mamma to let me go."

"What did you see?"

" 'The Twelfth Night.' "

He hesitated for a moment and then asked, "Isn't that one of Shakespeare's plays?"

"Yes ; one of his comedies."

"You enjoyed it, I hope?"

"It was very prettily staged and well acted," she answered.

The carriage rolled along, and for several moments father and daughter held their peace, looking out at the crowds.

Clara of late was not anxious to engage her father in conversation, as he generally said something disagreeable. Relations between them were a little strained.

After a silence, which was just long enough to begin to be painful, Mr. Harkins commenced again.

"It wouldn't be a bad idea, Clara, if you would go to the theatre oftener. You stay at home and mope too much. That's not good for a young girl. You will become an old maid if you are not careful."

The idea of never getting married did not seem to have any terrors for the girl, for she smiled as she said, "There are some very nice old maids ; Aunt Jane, for instance."

"That's all right about Aunt Jane. But we don't want any Aunt Claras or Sister Claras either."

She closed her eyes as he ended the sentence, as if to shut out his words from her mind.

He faced toward her a little more, and she could see from his manner that he was getting ready to say something which she knew would be disagreeable for her to hear.

"I want to settle this matter once for all, Clara. It has been hanging fire for nearly two years, and during that time it has given considerable worry both to your mother and myself. Now you have got to put this foolishness about entering a convent out of your head forever."

She could feel her heart beating rapidly and her hands trembling. She finally managed to muster up her courage and answer quietly, but firmly, "I am afraid I can never do that."

"You can and you must," he cried, picking up the paper and striking it angrily against his knee. "A convent was never intended for such as you. It's a place for women who have never had a chance to marry or for those whose lives have been blighted by some great trouble. A convent is no place for a young girl to go and bury herself."

"Your notion of a convent, father," she answered, "is, I think, a very unjust one. The majority of those who enter are young girls, and they are not buried there. They are very much alive."

This reply seemed to nettle Mr. Harkins. He had his own notions of what a convent was, or rather he had manufactured his notions of a convent to suit himself as soon as he had discovered his daughter's tendency.

"If any young girls do enter convents," he rejoined,

"it is a great mistake. They would do much better to remain in the world, and they would be far happier."

"I have known some very unhappy and broken-hearted people in the world, but I never remember seeing any of the nuns in the convent unhappy."

"But you don't know anything at all about their happiness or unhappiness," he answered angrily. "You have only seen the convent with the eyes of a school-girl. You know absolutely nothing of the misery its four walls contain."

Clara played impatiently with the tassel of the window-shade, not knowing at first what to say to this extravagant statement. As her father did not follow up his words it gave her a moment to frame her answer.

"I have heard such statements made before about the misery of nuns in convents, and I must say that I don't believe there is a particle of truth in them. If the nuns I know in the convent were in constant misery, then they concealed it splendidly. I thought they were about the happiest mortals I had ever met."

Mr. Harkins, finding that his arguments were of no avail, grew more angry.

"What you think, Clara, has nothing to do with facts. I am certain that if you did go to the convent you would be home in a month's time." Mr. Harkins's anger impaired his better judgment. His daughter was not slow to make good use of his words.

"Suppose, then, you give me your permission to try the experiment of convent life for a month?"

He realized that he had fallen into a trap, and simply

answered with great vehemence, "No ; I don't want any experiments."

They were now within a few paces of their home, and Mr. Harkins hastened to deliver his ultimatum.

"You may as well understand now, Clara, that never with my consent will you enter a convent. I have put up with this foolishness of yours for a long time with great patience. I have remembered that you were my only daughter, and I did not want to give you any unnecessary pain. I see now that I should have acted more promptly and ended the matter sooner. I hope you appreciate my forbearance. But now I am determined that you shall obey me." He paused for a moment, and then continued, "As long as I am living to prevent it, you shall not become a nun."

He was so distracted when he had finished this declaration, that he opened the carriage door as the horses came to a stop, and jumping out hurried up the steps, leaving his daughter to follow him.

The coachman, noticing this, dropped from his seat and assisted Clara out of the carriage.

His eyes followed her in wonder as she slowly ascended the steps.

When he had returned to his seat he said to himself, "I wonder why she is crying?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

*"Get place and wealth, if possible with grace ;
If not, by any means get wealth and place."*

"I CANNOT imagine what is going to become of that girl," Mrs. Harkins said to her husband, as they were sitting alone in the dining-room that evening, just after their children had left. "She is losing flesh every day. She does not eat enough to keep the life in a bird."

"It's that foolish convent business that is the cause of her losing flesh," Mr. Harkins answered, throwing down his napkin impatiently on the table.

"The doctor was passing by to-day," his wife continued, "and dropped in. I called Clara to the parlor to see him, and afterward I asked him what he thought of her. He said that she was failing slowly but surely, and that as it was mental trouble he could do nothing for her. There would be no cure, in his opinion, until the cause in some way was removed."

"The cause will be removed !" Mr. Harkins declared emphatically, striking the table to accentuate his words. "I gave her to understand very plainly this evening that she will never get my consent to become a nun, and that, moreover, she must abandon the notion altogether."

Mrs. Harkins half filled her cup with tea. "I wish very much that she would give up the idea, but I am afraid she will not. She has inherited her father's will and determination."

"She will have to inherit his ideas also," he answered.

"What reply did she make when you told her your decision?"

"We arrived at the door just as I had finished speaking, and I did not wait to hear her answer. No answer is necessary. She is my daughter, and she must obey me."

"What would you think of letting her try the convent for a short time? She might tire of the whole thing, and then there would be an end of it."

"I don't believe in experiments," he answered somewhat testily.

Mrs. Harkins took a sip of strong tea. "Neither do I, ordinarily," she said; "but something must be done or the girl will waste away to nothing."

"It's her own fault if she does."

"But you don't want to see her dying slowly before your eyes, do you?"

"No; I want to see her obey me."

Mrs. Harkins put down her cup and sat back in her chair.

"It is a pity Clara won't be like other girls. I am sure that if she would give young men the least encouragement, she could have her choice of half a dozen of the very best of them. She is tall and good-looking, and has very winning manners."

"And to think of throwing herself away by entering a convent!" Mr. Harkins added in disgust. "I am sorry I ever sent her there for her education."

"Perhaps it was a mistake, but the convent made her what she is."

"She would have done as well at any other school," he answered impatiently.

"I don't think so," his wife said quietly.

"Why not?"

"Well, the convent wrought a great change in her character. After the first year I could notice that she was more gentle, kindly, reserved, and unaffected. And these are the qualities which have endeared her so much to those who know her. There is a kind of forgetfulness of self about her which many people have remarked. She absorbed those ideas while going to school at the convent."

"If she had only learned the virtue of obedience there, it would have been better for her," he answered in a manner which plainly showed that he was impatient of hearing anything said in favor of convent training.

He took a cigar from his pocket and lit it. Then he got up from his chair.

"I have made known my final decision to Clara," he said, "and I think it would be well if you also would speak as strongly as you can to her."

"I will do so," she replied, rising and following him.

When he reached the door he stood for a moment and said, "I have every reason to believe that Mr. Parker wishes to make Clara his wife."

"What!" cried Mrs. Harkins, her eyes growing large with wonder, and visions of a summer house at Newport and sundry like things floating before her.

"It is certain that he is in love with her," her husband continued. "In fact, he told me so."

"Good!" she exclaimed. "Clara as Mr. Parker's wife could live like a queen."

Mr. Harkins was pleased with his wife's enthusiasm. He felt that Clara could not hold out against both of them.

"You need not mention Mr. Parker's intentions yet a while," he cautioned; "just tell her that we are both a unit on the convent business."

"I certainly shall use every argument I can think of to persuade her to give it up," she declared with great emphasis. "It is a chance in a thousand, and must not be lost."

The following morning, after Mr. Harkins had finished his breakfast and gone to business, Mrs. Harkins went up to her daughter's room. She opened the door quietly and walked in.

Clara was kneeling at her bedside, saying her morning prayers, and so deeply absorbed was she that she did not hear her mother open the door and enter.

Mrs. Harkins came over to the kneeling girl and said softly, "Clara."

The girl gave a nervous start, and then seeing her mother standing beside her, rose from her knees.

"Don't you think, dear, that you have been praying

long enough, and that you ought to come downstairs and have a cup of coffee?"

"Has papa gone yet?" she asked.

"More than half an hour ago," her mother assured her.

They went down to the dining-room together, and Clara drank a cup of coffee and buttered a small piece of bread, which she did not eat.

Mrs. Harkins watched her daughter anxiously and urged her to eat, but the girl pleaded a sick headache, and said she had no desire for food.

"You had better come into my room," her mother proposed when Clara had finished her coffee. "The house is a little damp, and there is a fire there."

Clara followed her mother into a room where a fire was burning cheerfully.

It was a dismal day outside. Snow the night previous had turned into a heavy rain, and the dreary street was quiet and deserted. When they were both seated before the fire Mrs. Harkins, following her husband's advice and cheered on to renewed efforts by visions of castles in Spain which five million dollars would buy, began the conversation.

"Your father told me that he spoke to you last evening about your persistence in wishing to give up the world and go into a convent."

"Yes, he did," Clara replied; "and he made me feel very unhappy by the way he talked to me."

"I am afraid, Clara, that you make *him* feel very unhappy."

"It's unfortunate, then, if I do ; I surely do not wish to do so."

"But it is in your power to avoid giving him displeasure."

"How?" Clara asked.

"By obeying his wishes," her mother answered.

"And give up my desire to become a nun?"

"Yes ; for your father's and mother's sake."

The girl shook her head.

"I can't do it."

"You could if you tried."

"No," she answered with a sigh ; "it is not a thing that can be done by trying. You know and papa knows that there is nothing else I would not gladly do to please you both. But in asking me to give up the convent, you ask me to act directly against the one great, strong desire of my life."

"But we are requesting you to do something which is for your own good," her mother said.

"How can it be a benefit when I hate it?"

"That is strong language, my child."

"It is only the faint expression of a stronger feeling," Clara answered.

She sat staring at the golden-red fire burning brightly, and waited for her mother to continue.

Mrs. Harkins, finding that she was making no impression, changed her tactics and became milder and more coaxing.

"It is such a pity, Clara," she said, drawing nearer to her, "that you ever let this idea of becoming a nun

take possession of you. It has destroyed the peace of the family. You cannot imagine how much your father has worried over it, and as for me, I have tossed on my bed night after night thinking about you."

There was a look of great pain in her daughter's face as Mrs. Harkins finished speaking, and she felt that at last she had made an impression.

"And am I to be blamed for all this?" Clara asked.

"I do not tell it to you, child, to chide you; I merely say that it is a pity that it is so."

Clara leaned her head upon her hand and answered as if in a reverie, "I suppose I am the cause of suffering to you and papa, but I don't see how I can avoid it."

She seemed to be arguing the case with herself, and her mother listened to her and watched her with increasing excitement.

"I don't see how I can do otherwise. I firmly believe that God has called me to a religious life, and that I ought to obey Him."

This sentiment did not please Mrs. Harkins, and she interrupted the girl, bringing her back again to a sense of actual things.

"I admire you greatly, Clara, for your goodness and your conscientiousness, but at the same time I think it is rather hard that we have to give up our only daughter."

This pleading, pained tone which her mother had adopted was the one which Clara found hardest to combat.

"You speak of my entering a convent as if I were going to my grave. If I did become a nun you could see me occasionally. It is not as if I intended to enter a cloistered order."

"But seeing you from time to time is not like having you."

"Yes ; but if I remained in the world and married you would have to part with me."

"It would be a very different parting," her mother argued.

"I might, too, if I remained in the world make a miserable marriage."

"You might not," Mrs. Harkins answered, smiling.

"I am sure to be happy in the convent. Wouldn't you like to see me happy for life?"

"Certainly ; and that is why I wish you to remain in the world and get married."

"Don't you think that if I remained in the world and married, feeling that God had given me a vocation to the religious life, that my conscience would always bother me and make me miserable?"

"I believe that you would forget all about what you call your religious vocation and wonder at yourself for ever having taken it seriously."

Mrs. Harkins realized for the second time that her words were having no effect upon her daughter, and she was most anxious, after what her husband had told her about Mr. Parker's growing fondness for Clara, to extract from the girl a promise to give up all thought of a

religious life. She drew herself together for a final effort.

"I have tried to make you understand, my dear child, how bad your father and I have felt because of your persistency, and I have used different arguments to show you how wrong you are in following so blindly this strange feeling which you call vocation. Now," she continued, rising from her chair, and coming over to her, "your mother is going to beg of you to grant her the one great wish of her life." She put her two arms about her daughter's neck, and leaning over kissed her forehead. "I want you to promise me that you will never enter a convent without my consent."

Clara was pale and silent.

"Promise me that, I beg of you," again pleaded her mother.

Clara rose from her chair and slipped her mother's arms off her neck. She felt icy cold and was visibly trembling.

"What you ask, mother," she said, "is impossible. I cannot promise it." Then she walked across the floor to the door and left the room. Outside the door she put her hands to her head and cried, "This will drive me insane."

Her mother looked out on the dreary street, but she saw no castles in the air.

CHAPTER XIX.

*"I give thee all—I can no more,
Though poor the off'ring be;
My heart and lute are all the store
That I can bring to thee."*

HORACE BRYCE and Gabrielle Crystal met only once after the scene in the cemetery. He wrote her, making an engagement, and she steeled herself against the meeting. She told him that she much regretted that he had argued from her manner toward him that she cared for him other than in a friendly way. She said such a thing as loving him was out of the question. He answered that that was sufficient, and left her.

Gabrielle breathed more freely after the interview was over. She could not accuse herself of having done any intentional wrong, but she could not but feel sad that she was even the indirect cause of pain to Horace Bryce, from whom she had received many kindnesses.

The love between Gabrielle and John Fulton strengthened with the lengthening days. Mrs. Crystal adopted the plan of waiting a little longer before speaking to her daughter.

Mr. Crystal felt that if Gabrielle was to marry she could not get a better husband.

John Fulton called frequently to see the Crystals, and each time his love for Gabrielle increased, as did his disgust for chess. But every rose has its thorn, and most young women have fathers or mothers or aunts who have to be humored. Two hours out of every three which he spent in Eldridge Street were devoted to chess-playing. He accepted the situation for the simple reason that he could do nothing else. This is always a simple reason, but it is entirely sufficient.

The March winds had begun to blow over the earth when John Fulton came one evening to the door of the house in which his friends lived.

As he laid his hand upon the bell, he suddenly took a resolution. He would, if possible, tell Gabrielle that very night that he loved her. When he entered the house he found, to his glad surprise, that Mr. Crystal was out on business, and would not be home until a very late hour. The young man breathed more freely. For one evening there would be no game of chess.

He found Gabrielle unusually vivacious and bubbling over with happiness. She played and sang, talked and laughed until overcome by sheer exhaustion. It was her birthday; she was just twenty years of age, and she gave that as an excuse for her merriment. Near the end of a very pleasant evening Mrs. Crystal and Agnes left the room to prepare a little lunch in honor of Gabrielle's birthday.

John Fulton drew up two chairs near the fire and bade Gabrielle take one of them and rest herself. A slight flush came into his cheeks as he sat down beside

her. They chatted for a time in a joking way on her advancing age. Then they fell to talking of "old, unhappy, far-off things." "You told me once, you remember, Gay," he said, "that you loved me better than anybody else in the world, except your papa, mamma, and Agnes." It was his way of leading up to the final declaration.

"Well, haven't I been faithful to that sentiment ever since?" she replied, laughing.

"She doesn't understand me," he murmured to himself. "I mean 'love,' she means 'friendship.'"

He knew that Mrs. Crystal or Agnes would probably soon return to the room, and he began to grow nervous. He became afraid now that Gabrielle did not love him—that she had never even thought of such a thing. But he was anxious to tell her how much he loved her, so that at least she would know how he felt toward her before another could come along and carry her away. Between his feverish desire to declare his love and the fear that some one would enter the room, he became rapidly more nervous, and Gabrielle, noticing this, looked at him in surprise. He commenced once more in a roundabout way to lead up to the statement which he wished to make, but just as he was about to declare his love Agnes entered the room, and he sat back in his chair again.

Fortunately she remained but a moment. As soon as she was gone he began again. "For several weeks, Gay, I have been wanting to say something to you, and I think I had better say it to-night."

It was strange how great a change love had made in him. A few months back Gabrielle was a "good little girl." Now he sat before her in fear and trepidation, with scarcely a hope that she would understand his love for her.

She looked up as he spoke, but when she saw his serious, white face she dropped her eyes again.

"What I am going to say will be very unexpected and a matter of great surprise to you. But I want to say it, and for old time's sake I ask one thing, and that is, that you will not be offended or angry with me." He leaned over and rested his hand on her chair, and as he did so he noticed a moisture in her eyes. "She suspects what I am going to say, and the very thought of it repels her," he said to himself.

For a moment he hesitated, thinking that it would be better not to speak. The next instant he changed his mind completely, and burst forth almost in despair, "Gay, I must tell you, I can't help it—I love you!"

She sobbed and covered her face with her hands.

He sank back in his chair and sighed, "It's all over forever."

Gabrielle was wondering whether it was wrong to be so happy.

Agnes and Mrs. Crystal came into the room, and John Fulton recovered himself as best he could, and wished Gabrielle great happiness on her birthday. He was astonished at her return of good spirits. The sight of her laughing face made him sick at heart. He wondered how she could feel so happy when she had made

him so miserable. He left earlier than usual, inventing an excuse. Gabrielle stole out on the landing.

"Jack ! Jack !" she whispered in a low voice, lest her mother might hear her.

He turned around surprised.

"Jack, I wanted to tell you before you left that—that—I always loved you."

"Loved me !" he exclaimed in astonishment, coming back to her. "Why, you cried to-night when I spoke to you."

"I know, but that was because I was so happy." She bowed her head as she spoke.

"Why, you are crying now," he said doubtfully.

"I know, but didn't you ever hear of people crying when they were very, very happy ?"

"Yes, that's so ; I never thought of that. Do girls always cry when they love a person ?" he said, as if to reassure himself by statistics.

"How do I know ?" she answered, a little hurt ; "I never was in love with anybody before. I have been in love with you all the time, and you never cared for me."

"Never cared for you, Gay ! Why, I love you better than my own life."

"Gay ! Gay !" her mother called, "don't be keeping Jack ; didn't you hear him say he was in a hurry to get home ?"

He caught her hand and asked again, to reassure himself, "Do you really love me, Gay ?"

She bowed her head in answer, and he raised her hand to his lips and kissed it.

"You must not be delaying Jack talking about trivial things when he is anxious to go," Mrs. Crystal said to her daughter when she returned to the room. Gabrielle promised that she would not do so any more, but she could not admit to herself that she had delayed Jack with talk of trivial things.

The evening after John Fulton had told Gabrielle that he loved her, Mrs. Crystal and her eldest daughter were sitting alone. Mrs. Crystal had determined after mature deliberation to speak to Gabrielle about John Fulton's love for her.

"I wish to say a few words to you, Gay," her mother began, "in regard to a matter that has been on my mind for some weeks past."

Gabrielle's eyes opened in wonder at the serious tone of her mother's voice. She blushed and grew pale by turns and shifted about uneasily in her chair. "Did her mother suspect?" she wondered.

Mrs. Crystal continued, "I have noticed of late a great change in Jack's manner toward you."

Gabrielle dropped her eyes.

"Have you been aware of this change yourself?"

Gabrielle nervously rubbed the plush on the arms of the chair the wrong way.

Her mother repeated the question, "Have you noticed Jack growing fonder of you?"

"I think so;" then she added as a qualification, "a little."

Mrs. Crystal shook her head at a large crayon portrait of her husband hanging on the wall, as if to say, "I told you so."

"Have you given Jack any encouragement?"

"Well, I always liked Jack, you know, mamma, and when he began to like me I didn't think it would be honest to tell him that I didn't like him."

"You didn't think it would be honest to tell him that you did not like him!" the mother exclaimed, repeating her daughter's words. "Has Jack said anything to you?"

Gabrielle hung her head.

Her mother was insistent. "Answer me; has Jack spoken to you?"

Gabrielle bowed her head. It was the easiest way to answer.

"What did he say?"

Here was a good chance to tell everything and have the ordeal over. Gabrielle was finding it very disagreeable to feel one moment as if a simoom was blowing over her, and the next moment as if a wind from Greenland's icy mountains was playing about her. Better pitch all reserve to the winds, arctic and equatorial, and just out with the truth.

"He said that he loved me."

"Goodness!" her mother cried.

Gabrielle quickly jumped to her feet.

"Gracious!" Mrs. Crystal exclaimed.

Gabrielle fell back into her chair.

Each of her actions was unconscious—what philosophers call an *actus hominis*.

“And what did you say to him?”

“Well, I couldn’t tell him a lie.”

“And did you tell him that you loved him?”

“Yes; I had to do so.”

“Why did you have to?”

“Well”—Gabrielle pouted her lips and turned her head aside—“because I do love him.”

Mrs. Crystal sank back in her chair and was unable for several moments to say anything.

Gabrielle recalled the poet’s line :

“The course of true love never did run smooth.”

“My love,” she murmured, “must be genuine.”

Mrs. Crystal gradually recovered.

“Why didn’t you refer Jack to me or to your father when he spoke to you?”

“I didn’t think of it, it came so sudden.”

“When did he speak to you?”

“Last evening,” Gabrielle answered.

Mrs. Crystal shook her head hopelessly. If only she had acted twenty-four hours sooner, she could at least have delayed matters. Now there was nothing else to do but to accept the situation. She thought of her own love-making, and how her father had received the love letters and told her what was in them. “*Eh bien*,” she whispered to herself, “it is a long way from Quebec to New York.”

Later in the evening Mrs. Crystal told the whole story to her husband, ending the recital by exclaiming, "Didn't I tell you so?"

He was forced to admit that she had. And thus it became an accepted fact that John Fulton and Gabrielle Crystal were in love.

CHAPTER XX.

*"Gold! Gold! Gold! Gold!
Bright and yellow, hard and cold."*

MR. HARKINS had made a quarter of a million dollars in the real estate business. Then he began to dabble in railroad stocks. Several of his speculations were lucky ones, and this increased his greed for gold.

A few weeks after the day Mr. Parker had intimated that he was thinking seriously of proposing to Clara, Mr. Harkins discovered that his more recent speculations in railroad stocks were likely to prove failures on account of the juggling of a clever and unscrupulous financier. He had speculated so heavily that there was danger of the greater part of his fortune which he had made in real estate being swept away.

Only one man could save him from such a calamity, and that was Mr. Parker. The anxiety of the father to have his daughter abandon her intention of becoming a nun naturally increased.

Clara did not give Mr. Parker the least encouragement, and her father and mother noticed this. Her conduct was not at all in conformity with their wishes. Mr. Parker on one occasion intimated that he found Clara rather cool toward him in her manner. Mrs.

Harkins explained that her daughter was so determined on entering a convent that she discouraged attentions from all men. This seemed to satisfy Mr. Parker, who on hearing of Clara's intention became more desirous of making her his wife.

At length the day of trial came for Mr. Harkins. Unless some one stood by him he would be ruined. Mr. Parker was his only hope. He laid the true state of his affairs before the millionaire, and Mr. Parker promised his assistance on condition of Clara's acceptance of him.

Mr. Harkins, pale and worried-looking, came home earlier than usual that day, and letting himself quietly into the house, went straight to his daughter's room.

When Clara saw his face she knew that his trouble must be a great one. He lost no time in coming to the point.

"I have asked you several times to abandon your intention of becoming a nun. I have never been able to get a promise from you. I have now come to tell you that if you will give up this idea, Mr. Parker is ready to make you his wife."

Clara closed the copy of "The Imitation" which she had been reading, and laid it on the table. The news was not altogether unexpected, but still it came to her with no little shock.

"Whatever I do, I will *not* marry Mr. Parker!" she answered with great determination.

"I know Mr. Parker to be an excellent man," her father went on. "He treated his first wife splendidly,

and he will treat you just as well. He is immensely wealthy, and you can have everything you wish."

"It is utterly useless, father," the girl interrupted, "to recommend Mr. Parker to me. I simply will not marry him."

Mr. Harkins took a deep breath, and his teeth closed tight. The look in his eyes frightened his daughter. He moved backward until he came to the door, which he shut.

"In less than one week as things are now I shall be a ruined man. I have ventured nearly all that I possess, and I am being closed in upon. There is one man that stands between me and bankruptcy. That man is Mr. Parker. If you accept his offer of marriage, I will be saved. If you refuse him, I will be a beggar."

Clara was shaking violently before her father finished speaking. Here was a reason advanced which had never been urged before. She hid her face in her hands, and broke into sobs.

"O father, I cannot do it!" she cried. "I don't want to marry at all; and as for Mr. Parker, I have not the slightest affection for him."

Whether Clara had any love for Mr. Parker was to her father's mind a thing of no consequence whatever. It was an unknown quantity to him. He married his wife, who was considerably older than himself, not because he loved her, but because by marrying her he saw a chance to get wealth. The great passion of his life had been money-making. He had made money his god, and now there was danger of his god abandoning him.

The thought of becoming a poor man near the end of his life almost drove him mad.

Mrs. Harkins, who was in another part of the house, heard the voices, and came downstairs and into her daughter's room. She was, of course, surprised to find her husband there. Seeing his blanched face and Clara in tears, she asked for an explanation, and her husband told her then for the first time of his impending ruin.

As soon as she had fully grasped the situation she burst into tears, exclaiming, "O Clara! you surely have not the heart to refuse Mr. Parker, when you know what will result from your refusal."

"I don't know as I have the heart for anything; I have had enough trouble to break it," Clara answered.

"But if you would only put that thought of the convent out of your mind, the rest, I am sure, would be very easy. Mr. Parker will idolize you. He will do everything to make you happy."

"He will do everything to make me unhappy by marrying me."

"Oh, don't say that!" her mother exclaimed in an entreating voice. "Try for our sakes to reconcile yourself to marrying him."

"Oh, no, I cannot!" Clara answered passionately. "It would be a living death for me. There is no use," she continued, as if she were giving the thought a trial in her mind; "I cannot do it!"

"Will you send us to the poorhouse, then," Mrs. Harkins asked angrily, "just to satisfy a whim?"

"A whim?" the girl cried excitedly. "Do you call

the wish of my life a whim? If you had allowed me to enter the convent two years ago, when I first proposed it, I would have been saved all this misery."

"But think of what would happen to us. Aren't we to be considered?"

"Yes; I suppose you are." Sarcasm and anger were mingled in this last remark, and it was the first time in her life that Clara had ever spoken that way to her mother.

"Would you be happy in a convent," Mrs. Harkins continued, "and your mother going out to do a day's washing? Imagine me having to go from house to house just as Ellen comes to us. Think of your poor mother reduced to such misery and you able to prevent it."

The thought was too much for Mrs. Harkins, and she again burst into tears.

"O Clara, why will you be so obstinate and go against your father's and your mother's wishes? Haven't we always done everything that we could for you, and is it too much to ask you to do this one favor for us and keep us from poverty and ruin?"

Clara sat still, hardly realizing what her mother was saying.

Mrs. Harkins, finding that she received no answer to her last solicitation, rushed over to her daughter's side, and falling on her knees, cried, "For my sake, Clara, make this sacrifice! Do not let this misfortune fall upon us! It will kill me if I am reduced to poverty in my old age! Speak, I beg of you, and tell me that you will do it and save me from the grave!"

This appeal was too much for the girl. The sight of her mother kneeling before her was more than she could bear. She turned to a small pearl crucifix which was hanging on the wall over her bed, and fixing her eyes intently on it, murmured to herself, "Dear God, accept this bitterest of all sacrifices which I offer to Thee!" She then got up from her chair, and facing her mother, said, "I will do what you have asked me. Now please leave me alone."

Mrs. Harkins rose from her knees, and throwing her arms about her daughter, exclaimed, "God will reward you because you are a dutiful child."

The father and mother, satisfied at last, went out of the room, as their daughter requested.

Clara Harkins, left alone, consoled herself in a strange way. She had not the slightest affection for the man she was to marry, therefore in marrying him she was not false in the least to her desire to become a nun. If he had been a young man, one of several she knew and admired, then there would be some compensation in the marriage. But in marrying Mr. Parker the sacrifice was complete, and she was happier in the thought that she did not care at all for him. She had not of her own will put her hand to the plough and then looked back. She was to marry simply to save her father from a financial wreck. It was a *mariage de convenance*, which would benefit her parents. She would be a good wife to Mr. Parker. He would have no cause to complain of her, except that she would have no affection for him,

and he could not in all conscience, she said to herself, expect that.

Having accepted the situation, she sat down to write a letter to the Mother Superior of the convent which she had intended entering. In the letter she stated the case as it was and her own feelings in the matter.

Having finished it, she laid down the pen, and then the vision of the convent came up before her. The quiet, the nuns at prayer in the chapel or taking their recreation together, the grottoes in the garden, the different spiritual exercises, the panorama of the daily life of the nuns, which she promised herself would one day be hers, passed before her, and left her with bowed head, weeping bitterly.

CHAPTER XXI.

"She sat like patience on a monument."

THE news of Clara's acceptance was sent next day to Mr. Parker. The millionaire had given Mr. Harkins to understand that in case he was to marry Clara, he would be perfectly satisfied with any arrangement her conscience would dictate to her in regard to the ceremony.

It was agreed that Mr. Parker would call that afternoon to hear from his *fiancée* that she had accepted his proposal.

Shortly after luncheon was over the door-bell rang, sounding in Clara's ears like a death-knell, and the next moment she heard Mr. Parker's voice in the hallway.

He was ushered into the parlor, and when Clara appeared was sitting there talking to her mother. Mrs. Harkins, after the first greeting was over, quietly left the room, and Clara found herself alone with the man she did not love.

They exchanged a few general remarks, and then Mr. Parker, being a man to whom time was money, got down to business.

"I have always had a most exalted opinion of you, Miss Harkins," he began; "and while I do not believe

in young women entering convents, at the same time my admiration for you has increased because of this very desire."

She bowed in acknowledgment of his praise and held her peace.

"There is so little of this self-sacrificing spirit in the world, that one is glad to find it, even though one cannot always approve of the manner in which it is manifested."

Clara bowed again.

Mr. Parker, having finished his preface, entered upon the matter which had brought him to see her.

"I spoke a short time ago to your father about my eagerness to make you my wife, and he told me then that you were so bent on entering a convent, that you would give the thought of marriage no place in your mind. I would have mentioned my desire to you first, Miss Harkins," he said, by way of apology, "only I never found you responsive enough when I was in your company. For that reason I consulted with your father, and to-day he called to see me, and told me that if I proposed to you I would be accepted. So I hastened to hear the happy acknowledgment from your own lips. Am I to understand that my proposal is accepted?"

"You are, Mr. Parker, provided you understand the condition," she replied.

"What is that?" he asked, showing a mixture of happiness and curiosity.

"I am willing to marry you, as my parents wish it ;

but I make no promises of love. I do not love you, nor do I expect ever to be able to love you."

Mr. Parker hesitated before asking his next question. After the lapse of a few moments he said, "Is there any one else with whom you are in love?"

"No one else," she answered. "If I must marry, I am as willing it should be you as another."

This was what Mr. Parker was anxious to hear. She preferred the convent to him, but nothing else. He rather liked the idea. He would eventually triumph over the convent in her affections. He was sure of this. He pictured her kneeling by his side some day, after they were married, and thanking him from an overflowing heart for the great privilege he had conferred upon her by making her his wife.

Altogether Mr. Parker was well satisfied. It gave him no little pleasure to know that the girl he was going to marry was considerably above most young women in goodness. He promised himself that he would grow upon her.

"I am anxious for the marriage to take place as soon as convenient to you, Miss Harkins," he said. "Would it be too much to ask you if the engagement might be announced immediately?"

"I do not object in the least," she replied. "The ceremony need not be delayed on my account."

"I would like to take a trip to Europe, as I have not been feeling well of late. We could go shortly after the marriage."

She shuddered when she thought of the trip to Europe.

In a few moments Mr. Parker finished all that he had to say, and Clara called her mother. When her mother came into the room the girl asked to be excused, pleading a headache.

When she was gone Mrs. Harkins sat down beside Mr. Parker, and they discussed the situation.

"You must not expect to find my daughter over-pleased at the prospect of marriage," Mrs. Harkins explained. "She has been so determined on becoming a nun, that the very thought of marriage has been hateful to her. You must make allowance for her on that account, if you find her unsatisfactory."

Mr. Parker assured her that his first interview with Clara was all that he desired.

"As she grows older," continued Mrs. Harkins, "she will get rid of these foolish notions, and then, Mr. Parker, you will have for your wife one of the best young women on this earth."

"I am sure of that," he assented. "It does not do a girl any harm to have notions of this kind when she is young. They make her a better woman. Her nature becomes more spiritualized."

He was convinced that he was just the man to appreciate and enjoy such a nature.

Mr. Parker rose to go. "I shall do all in my power to make Clara happy," he said, as he reached for his hat and cane.

"And she will be happy without doubt," Mrs. Harkins exclaimed in an outburst of feeling.

CHAPTER XXII.

*"Not so sick, my lord,
As she is troubled with thick-coming fancies,
That keep her from her rest."*

IT is one thing to make a sacrifice, but it is another thing to bear up under the burden of it. Thus it was in Clara Harkins's case. The attitude of her parents in regard to what she considered a call from Heaven, to lead a life apart from the world, had been a great strain for her to bear. She was not, therefore, very strong physically, when this new trouble came upon her.

After her mother's entreaty she felt that there was nothing else to do but to accept Mr. Parker. He stood between her father and ruin, and for that reason she would become the millionaire's wife. She formulated this proposition to herself over and over again, and kept telling herself that she was doing her duty. But somehow the load about her heart grew hourly heavier. When the door-bell rang the sound of it cut through her like a knife. In the solitude of her room she feared she would go mad.

For one week she stood this terrible strain, and then something snapped. It was just at dusk one evening that Mrs. Harkins came into her daughter's room. The

shades had been drawn and the gas was burning dimly. Clara was lying on the bed moaning. At the sound of her mother's voice she sprang up and burst into tears. The next moment she began talking incoherently.

When Mrs. Harkins saw the look in Clara's eyes, her face blanched and her heart seemed to stand still. "Insane!" was the word that came to her lips.

"O my child!" she cried, throwing her arms about her daughter's neck and breaking into sobs; "what have we done to you?"

The sight of her mother weeping recalled Clara to a sense of her surroundings, and for a time her clouded mind seemed to clear. But it was only for a little while, and then followed weeping and incoherencies of speech.

That night the family physician was called, and Mrs. Harkins met him in the hallway and unburdened her mind to him. He had been treating the girl a long time and knew well what was the cause of her illness.

After a short talk with the doctor Clara grew calmer, and he saw that while her nerves were unstrung there was nothing radically wrong with her mind. But this knowledge he kept to himself. He sympathized with the suffering girl, and for that reason he gave her father and mother to understand that any attempt at a marriage with Mr. Parker at the present time would probably prove fatal to Clara. He also, as an extra precaution, advised that she be moved to some private re-

treat, as her present surroundings were only calculated to increase the malady.

Mr. and Mrs. Harkins lost no time in following the advice of the physician. They engaged rooms in a private hospital just outside the city, and thither the mother and daughter went a few days afterward.

It did not take long for the facts of Clara's illness and the cause of it to spread among the friends of the girl and of Mr. Parker. Nor did the story lose anything in the telling of it. Unfortunately for the millionaire, the blame was laid at his door. There were rumors in the air that Mr. Harkins had lost heavily of late in his speculations, and that Mr. Parker had agreed to come to his rescue provided Mr. Harkins would hand over his daughter to him. Now, a story of this kind was just the thing that Mr. Parker could not stand. There was one thing he valued most of all, and that was an immaculate reputation, and hitherto he had preserved one.

When the rumor reached his club he denied it with an oath, protesting that he had always acted in the matter as became an honorable man.

The news that Clara's health was broken and that her mind was possibly affected, cured Mr. Parker at once of his love for her. Clara full of high ideals had appealed to him strongly. He acknowledged to himself that only such a woman could properly appreciate a man of his qualities. But Clara ill and suffering would never do for a wife for him. Indeed, he was sorry that he had ever spoken to her father. He valued his reputation

far more than the love of any girl. The ugly story about him that was being freely circulated annoyed him, and made him wish that he had not been so hasty in declaring his intentions.

A few days after Clara had been removed from her home the financial crash came, through which Mr. Parker had promised to see Mr. Harkins in safety.

Mr. Parker's feelings toward his once prospective father-in-law had undergone a change. He accused Mr. Harkins of want of tact, and laid the blame of Clara's illness on him. There was an angry quarrel, but it did not last long. The anger passed away, and Mr. Parker agreed to stand by Mr. Harkins during the crash. Mr. Harkins was anxious to hold the millionaire to his bargain, and Mr. Parker, desirous of ending the matter, so that his reputation would not suffer any further, was satisfied to fulfil his part of the contract.

Clara rested quietly in the hospital, and a great joy filled her heart when word came to her that Mr. Parker wished to break the engagement.

CHAPTER XXIII.

*"The star of Love, all stars above,
Now reigns o'er earth and sky,
And high and low the influence know—
But where is County Guy?"*

AS John Fulton and Gabrielle were taking leave of each other one evening, a few weeks after they had acknowledged their mutual love, he held her hand for a moment and said, "I'll bring you a ring the next time I come, if you'll wear it." She turned her head aside, and blushing, answered, "If I will wear it?"

The following day a German steamer arrived at the port of New York with a large mail. Every letter-carrier whose district lies in the German neighborhood on the East Side knows from experience what an increase of work the arrival of a German steamer means for him. John Fulton had carried several heavy mail-bags out with him that day. On his last round he looked up at the clock on the high tower of a church and saw that he was unusually late. He had still two letters to deliver, but the delivery of them would necessitate a long walk. A cold and penetrating wind blew up from the East River, and it was raining heavily.

He had not been well during the day, and now he felt the wind chilling him and making his teeth chatter.

"I can deliver these letters in the morning," he said to himself, "so I'll return them to the clerk to-night." He slipped them into the pocket of his coat and hurried back to the post-office.

When he arrived there, all recollection of the letters had passed out of his mind.

He took off his coat and hung it on a nail while he went into the lavatory to wash his hands. There were three persons about the office at the time, none of whom he noticed. One, who was dressed as an ordinary laborer, was tying together several large pieces of wood which the carpenters, in making some alterations, had left after them. The other was an old woman, who had been scrubbing the floors during the day. These two went away together. The third person was Horace Bryce, who had remained somewhat late to do a little work which he had neglected.

John Fulton returned from the lavatory in a few moments, and slipping on his coat started for home.

He took a dose of quinine and went immediately to bed. On awakening in the morning he found himself much better, and then for the first time recollected that he had not returned the letters.

He caught up his coat and felt in the pocket to assure himself that the letters were safe, but to his great surprise they were missing. He looked about the room, but with no better success.

It was still early, and dressing hurriedly, he started immediately for the post-office, hoping that he would find them there. He went to the place where he had

hung his coat the evening before, but was again unsuccessful. He searched all over the post-office, but found no trace of the missing letters. He was in a quandary as to what to do. He did not like to report the loss, as he would be judged guilty of great negligence in not having delivered the letters, or at least in not having reported the fact and returned the letters to the clerk. To say he forgot seemed to him a silly excuse. He finally decided that he would wait a little before making known his loss. Perhaps some other carrier had found the letters and would return them to him.

Evening came, and he heard no news of the missing letters. The next day he did not make known his mishap, as the clerk to whom he wished to confide his secret was absent; so he put the matter out of his head for that day, lest he might appear worried when he called on Gabrielle in the evening.

During his dinner hour he stopped at a jewelry store and bought the engagement ring.

Gabrielle Crystal, resplendent in a new dress, lit the gas that evening in her parlor, and put the blower over the grate to quicken the dying fire into life again.

"I expect Jack to-night, Agnes," she said, as she arranged the room. "He is going to bring me a present."

She looked into her sister's eyes, and the look, if it were interpreted into words, would have meant, "Ask me what."

Agnes understood that she was being questioned, and inquired what the present would be.

"An engagement ring," Gabrielle answered with a happy smile. "I feel so sorry for you, Agnes, when I think of your going to bury yourself in a convent and being deprived of all the things on which a girl sets her heart."

Agnes looked at her and smiled.

"Don't make yourself unhappy, Gay, worrying about me. I feel certain that I am the happiest girl in New York. There isn't anything in the whole world that I would exchange for the life of a nun."

"I am glad to hear you say that, but I am afraid you hardly appreciate the greatness of my joy."

"We both ought to be well satisfied with ourselves," Agnes replied, "because I feel the same way in regard to you. It seems to me that life in the world is such a *little* thing. I never could feel satisfied with it. I want the complete satisfaction which can only come from the knowledge that every action, every thought even, is expended for the love of God. No matter how poor a nun I may be, no matter how far I may fall below my ideal, I shall always have the almost infinite consolation of knowing that I did everything for the pure love of God. A. M. D. G., you know, as we used to put at the beginning of our lessons in school."

Gabrielle listened with attention to her sister's serious words, but she hardly comprehended their meaning.

She leaned over the chair on which Agnes was sitting and kissed her.

"I am afraid I do not understand you, but I am sure

Our Lord does, and that is all you ever seem to care about."

The onyx clock on the mantel struck twice like a bell tolling, which indicated that it was a half hour after eight o'clock. Gabrielle uttered an exclamation of surprise, and walking over to the window looked anxiously up the street.

"I wonder why Jack is not here before this?" she said, scrutinizing several men on the sidewalk below. "He promised to be down early to-night. Another hard day's work, I suppose."

She pulled down the shade and turned to Agnes again. Then a new thought struck her, and her face brightened. She gave the piano stool a few quick turns and seated herself before the instrument.

"I know what will bring Jack," she remarked, turning her head around to Agnes with a happy smile: "I will play his favorite song." She struck the piano softly and began to hum an old air. The next instant the door-bell rang.

"Didn't I tell you that I would bring him?" Gabrielle exclaimed, jumping up from the piano, well satisfied with herself.

She heard somebody downstairs open the door, so she waited on the landing to welcome her lover.

A small boy came slowly up the stairs. Before reaching the top of the short flight he saw Gabrielle, and stopped chewing a huge mouthful of tutti-frutti gum long enough to ask, "Anybody by the name of Crystal live here?"

Gabrielle's heart beat violently as she discovered that the boy was a telegraph messenger and held in his hand a telegram. She could never get used to the sight of telegrams. She succeeded, after several unsuccessful attempts, in opening the envelope, and then she read these words, "Impossible to come down to-night. Jack."

She held the telegram before her in a dazed way.

"Sign here, please, miss," the boy with the mouthful of tutti-frutti said, holding up his book and a small, greasy lead-pencil.

She signed the book and handed it back to him.

"I hope it ain't bad news," he remarked sympathetically, as he took his book and pencil. "I hate to bring bad news. Now, this morning I brought a telegram to a woman, and when she opened it she fell in a faint right in my arms. The telegram said her little boy was dead, see?"

"No; it's all right," Gabrielle responded to the inquiries of the small boy, and searching in her pocket-book, found ten cents and gave it to him.

He took the chewing gum out of his mouth—a thing he seldom did—and bowed his thanks.

"You don't want to send an answer, do you, miss?" he asked, as he halted on the stairs.

"No," replied Gabrielle; "there is no answer."

"Well, good-night, miss; I'm glad you got good news instead of bad."

Gabrielle went into the room and showed the message to Agnes and her mother.

"I wonder what can be the matter?" she asked, as she held the telegram in her trembling hands.

"Perhaps he has extra work this evening," Mrs. Crystal suggested.

"Perhaps he doesn't feel well, and did not want to worry you by sending that as a reason," Agnes gave as her opinion.

But both were wide of the mark.

While Gabrielle was telling her sister how happy she felt, John Fulton, handcuffed to a detective, was on his way to Police Headquarters to answer to the charge of robbing the United States mail.

There had been several thefts committed within a short time in the branch post-office to which John Fulton was attached. Letters were sent there from the general post-office, but were never delivered. The authorities had taken the matter in hand, and for more than a month a private detective had been watching the mail. One of the letters which John Fulton failed to return the evening he was so ill and tired, contained a one-hundred-dollar bill, and the man to whom it was addressed had received a notice the same day advising him of the fact that the money had been sent. On not getting the letter, he reported the fact immediately at the post-office, and the detective was only a short time in tracing the missing money to John Fulton.

Robbing the mail is always a serious charge, and in this instance it was unfortunate for John Fulton that several offences of this kind had been committed just previous to his unhappy accident. He was brought up

for trial in an unusually short time, the postmaster being anxious to make an example of somebody. The young man told his story in a simple, straightforward manner, explaining how his memory had played him a trick, else he would have returned the two undelivered letters to the clerk when he arrived at the office. He could give no explanation as to how he lost the letters. They might have dropped out of his coat, and again some one might have stolen them.

The judge's charge to the jury was impartial enough. He instructed them that as no evidence had been brought forward to show that the prisoner was in any way connected with the other thefts which had been committed, the jury would not be justified in holding him responsible in any way for them.

They left the court-room, and in less than an hour's time filed back again. When they had taken their places the judge asked if they had agreed on a verdict.

"We have, Your Honor," the foreman answered.

In a moment the crowded court-room was as quiet as death.

The judge, addressing the jury, again asked, "What is your verdict? Guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty!" rang out the foreman's voice in the quiet room.

There was a woman's sob, a hiss from a number of letter-carriers who stood in a group together, and again all was still.

John Fulton was then commanded to rise, and the

judge, before pronouncing sentence, asked him if he had anything to say or any reason to give why sentence should not be passed upon him.

He rose slowly from his seat, and caught hold of the top of the bench in front of him to relieve his nervousness. His voice broke as he pronounced the first few words, but in an instant he had gained control of himself.

"I have nothing further to say than this, I am not a thief."

The court-room rang with spontaneous applause, in which even uninterested loiterers joined. There was the mark of truth in his words. The sympathetic applause was loud and long, but the prisoner did not hear it. He fell back in his seat, the flush disappeared from his cheeks, and he grew suddenly white and cold as his head dropped on his breast.

"Poor Gay! Poor Gay!" was all he said.

The judge, in a kindly tone, bade him rise again to hear his sentence. The jury had not made any recommendation to mercy, but there was something in the manner of the convicted man as he said, "I am not a thief!" which impressed the magistrate. He spoke in a feeling way of the young man's former good character, and then imposed the lightest sentence consonant with the verdict—two years in prison.

Mr. and Mrs. Crystal, who were at the trial, spoke a few encouraging words to John Fulton in the corridor, where they met him on his way to the cell. He grasped

Mr. Crystal's hand and whispered, "I feel it most on account of Gay."

"She will bear up," Mr. Crystal answered; "Gay is brave and strong."

John Fulton did not linger long in his parting with Mrs. Crystal. There was a look of pain in her face that reminded him strangely of Gabrielle the night that he had raised his eyes from the chess-board and had seen big tears trembling on her dark lashes.

"Tell her not to worry; that I can stand it."

He made a faint attempt to smile, but his heart was sore at the sight of the mother of the girl he loved, and he was glad when the officer touched him on the shoulder and told him it was time to go.

Mr. Crystal and his wife turned their weary steps homeward, and passed through the crowd of loiterers who seem to have no other business in life than to hang about the city courts listening to the trials. Some of the idlers whispered as Mr. Crystal and his wife went by, "There goes his poor mother and father."

Evidently if the convicted man had been tried by a jury picked from among them he would have been acquitted. But the mail had been robbed, and the thief must be caught and punished. John Fulton had made a mistake, and so he became the scapegoat. There was nothing strange in this. Men often in life have to suffer more for their mistakes than for their sins.

Gabrielle was watching from the window for the first sight of her father and mother. She had wished to

attend the trial, but John Fulton would not hear of it ; so in deference to his wishes she remained at home. The day was a cold and dreary one in the latter part of April. Gabrielle had been at the closed window for over an hour, looking up and down the street as far as she could, to catch a glimpse of her father and mother. The children going home from school to dinner and returning diverted her. A few of them looked up and, seeing her, smiled or threw a kiss, and she tried to smile back at them.

At last her father and mother came down the street, and she saw at a glance her fate written on their faces. With an effort she gathered her strength together and opened the parlor door for them. Her breath came in great gasps, and her white face was set and hard. Her mother looked at her in anguish, but said nothing.

Gabrielle waited a moment, and finding her mother silent, burst out in anger, it seemed, and exclaimed, " Did they say Jack was a thief ? "

" Sit down, Gay," her mother answered softly, " and in a little while we will tell you all. "

Gabrielle turned to her father and asked somewhat impatiently, " Tell me, did they declare him guilty ? I want to know ; I am able to stand it. "

Mr. Crystal watched her steadily for a moment as if measuring her strength. She seemed unusually cool, but there was an unnatural look in her face. He told her that John Fulton had been convicted.

" What is the sentence ? " she asked with a coolness which frightened her mother, who again begged her to

sit down and calm herself and not ask any more questions.

Her father hesitated, and she exclaimed, "I must know ; I have a right to know, as I am the one most concerned in it !"

"Well, Gay, it's not for long," he answered ; "only two years."

She swayed for a moment and then pitched suddenly forward. Her father caught her in his arms and tried to kiss the death-like lips back into life again. He laid her on the bed, and it was a long time before she gave any signs of returning life.

For three days she was utterly prostrated. In the meantime John Fulton had been railroaded off to prison. At the end of a week Gabrielle was able to leave her bed. They gave her a letter from John Fulton, and it seemed to revive her more than the doctor's medicine. The next morning she rose early and announced that she was going to work.

"It will occupy my mind, mamma," she answered when her mother protested. "I will forget a little while I am hard at work, whereas if I keep on thinking all the time I shall go crazy."

"Well, go in God's name, dear, if you think it will do you good," her mother answered.

In the evening when she returned she seemed somewhat brighter, and ate a little supper with apparent relish. She chatted for a short time after the meal was finished, and then quietly walked into the outer room, closing the door behind her. Agnes followed several

minutes afterward and noiselessly opened the door. Looking into the room, she saw Gabrielle kneeling at the sofa, with her head bowed in an agony of despair. At her feet lay John Fulton's letter. Her body shook with the violence of her great grief.

Agnes came quietly over to her, dropped down beside her, and slipped an arm about her sister's waist.

"Don't suffer so much, Gay," she said, whispering in her ear.

At the sound of Agnes's voice Gabrielle's grief broke out anew and her head beat against the rough hair-cloth of the old-fashioned sofa.

"O Agnes, you don't understand!" she cried bitterly. "You cannot understand. I have to suffer all alone. It's too terrible!"

Agnes felt her sister's body writhing in anguish, and it frightened her. She slipped her arm about Gabrielle's neck and laid her cool hand on her sister's feverish brow.

"It's too much!" Gabrielle exclaimed again. "Just when we were both so happy they send him to prison as a thief!"

The pronouncing of the word "thief" seemed to make her feel even more keenly the heavy blow which had fallen so unexpectedly on her and on her lover, and her sobbing began again.

"Don't kill yourself, Gay, with sorrow," Agnes said, trying to comfort her, and keeping back with great difficulty the tears starting from her own eyes. "Trust in God; it will all come right somehow in the end. You

will always love each other, no matter what happens. Besides, it might have been worse."

"No, no, no; it could not have been worse!" Gabrielle responded, her anger checking for a moment the violence of her sobbing. "You mean that if he had died it would have been a greater affliction; but that is not so. I do not think that his death even would have been so hard to bear as the thought that he has been condemned to prison for a crime which he never committed."

Agnes felt her sister growing rigid, and realized that the agony was about to begin again, so she hastily replied, "I didn't mean Jack's death would have been a greater trial to you; but just imagine how you would have felt if you knew that he was really guilty."

The approaching fit of anguish was suddenly arrested. Agnes saw at once that she had said the right thing. It was a new thought for Gabrielle, and it proved a convincing argument, as her changed countenance plainly showed.

She turned toward Agnes, and there was a beseeching look in her face, as if she craved for more consoling thoughts.

Agnes kissed the upturned cheek, wet with tears, and drew Gabrielle from off her knees, and they both sat on the sofa together. Then the younger sister continued, "I don't think, Gay, that you ought to grieve so much and so despairingly. I know your cross is a heavy one, but then if you only use your reason ever so little, you will see that not only might it be worse, but

that it is not even so heavy or so hopeless as you imagine. To begin with, in the whole matter there is no sin or crime. Jack is just as honorable to-day as he ever was. Supposing now, for instance, that after you had given him your love he had turned out to be a thief, then think how terrible your suffering would be."

Gabrielle greedily drank in every word, and they seemed to strengthen her like an invigorating cordial. Agnes, noticing the effect of what she was saying, kept on in the same strain.

"I am sure if I was in love with a young man and the same misfortune befell him as befell Jack, instead of grieving myself to death or worrying about the disgrace, I would feel more like defying the world. I would draw a consolation out of the misfortune, for I would love him all the better for his having suffered innocently."

These simple arguments gave Gabrielle's mind something to reason upon, and they lightened not a little the heavy feeling about her heart.

Agnes watched with gladness the gloom and sorrow disappearing from her sister's face, and followed up the advantage she had gained by more consoling words.

"For Jack's sake, Gay, you must bear up. The time will not be long in passing. And just think how poor Jack will feel if he hears that you are grieving yourself to death. Why, his only consolation is to look forward to marrying you when he is released."

Gabrielle raised her handkerchief to her face and

drew it across her eyes to obliterate the traces of her tears.

"What you say is true, Agnes ; I ought to bear up for Jack's sake."

"Exactly ; it will be milk and honey to Jack to receive happy and consoling letters from you, telling him how well you are bearing up for love of him, and how anxiously you are looking forward to the time when he will regain his liberty. There are many little things you might do to gladden him. For instance, you might get your photograph taken in your new dress, which he did not see, and send the picture to him. That dress is wonderfully becoming to you."

The happy light of a new hope came into Gabrielle's eyes.

"You are awfully good, Agnes," she said, "to suggest all these thoughts to me. You make me hope again."

Agnes watched with great happiness the signs which told her that her sister was beginning to be reconciled to her lot.

"You always say," she rejoined, "that I get everything I pray for. Now, won't you trust to my prayers once more, especially when I tell you that I was up to the convent to-day and spoke to Sister Eunice about you, and that she promised to have all the sisters pray for you and Jack ? God isn't going to let you suffer all the time. You'll have many a happy day in your life yet, if you only try to be strong and patient. Besides, while I was praying this afternoon in the sisters' chapel,

I asked Our Lord to give you all the happiness which He may have had in keeping for me."

These last words of Agnes wrought a quick and wonderful change in Gabrielle.

Like a flash her whole life came up before her mind. In an instant she remembered Agnes's many acts of kindness and her untiring patience. How well her younger sister had borne with every girlish whim of hers !

From early childhood it was always Agnes who made the sacrifices, and yet Agnes was a girl like herself, with even a more sensitive nature. It was true Agnes was to enter the convent, but was that a reason why she should always be the one to make the sacrifices ? Thoughts like these ran in a confused way through Gabrielle's mind when Agnes made known to her that she had prayed God to give all her own future happiness to her suffering sister.

As soon as Gabrielle realized Agnes's generosity, she caught her in her arms and kissed her.

"No, no, Agnes !" she cried ; "you must not pray like that. You must take back that prayer. I have been altogether too selfish ; I have never really considered you as I should have done. I have always thought of my own ends, and whether they would bring you one little bit of happiness I have never stopped to think. Now I am beginning to see and understand things better. It seems that it was necessary for me to suffer in order that my eyes might be opened. So promise me now that you'll take back that prayer. It makes me feel as if I was your murderer."

She held her sister's hand between her own, and the traces of her great sorrow were fast disappearing from her face.

"I am reconciled to my cross now," she continued. "You have taught me more in these few moments than I have learned in years. I believe I am almost content to have suffered so much in order to have learned this lesson. It will make me a better woman. See, now I have dried my eyes. There is no fear of my despairing again, so promise me that you will go up to the convent chapel to-morrow and revoke your prayer."

Agnes with a satisfied heart answered, "I'll do anything you wish, Gay, if you will only try to be patient, and not give way as you did to-night to such awful despair."

"It was terrible, wasn't it? I never before lost hope as I did this evening, and I trust I never shall again. It makes me shiver to think of what a great sin I have been guilty."

"Forget all about it, and make a strong resolution not to give way so completely again."

Agnes's philosophy was like a healing balm applied to Gabrielle's wounds. It soothed her aching heart and strengthened her.

"Suppose, Gay, we put our hats on and take a walk," the younger sister suggested; "you'll feel better for doing so."

Gabrielle gladly assented, and the two girls went into the room where Mrs. Crystal, with a pained look of the *Mater Dolorosa* in her eyes, had been sitting and worry-

ing about Gabrielle while the minutes slipped slowly away.

Agnes, as she entered the room, gave a quiet signal to her mother, to acquaint her of the fact that Gabrielle was better.

"We are going for a walk," Gabrielle announced to her mother. "I think it will do me good."

"I hope it will, dear," Mrs. Crystal replied, and the next moment the expression of her face changed, and she would have made a poor model for the *Mater Dolorosa*.

CHAPTER XXIV.

*" There ! little girl, don't cry !
They have broken your heart, I know,
And the rainbow gleams
Of your youthful dreams
Are things of long ago ;
But Heaven holds all for which you sigh.
There ! little girl, don't cry !"*

THE two girls walked to the north until they reached Houston Street. On turning the corner Gabrielle noticed a fold of black and white crêpe ornamented with a large white rosette hanging from the doorbell of a house. A shining black undertaker's wagon stood in the street. There was a washtub, half filled with broken ice, on the sidewalk. A little toddler had been helping herself to some of the ice, until an older sister saw her and forced the child to throw away the ice, which deprivation made the younger one cry. Children of all sizes blocked the sidewalk, making walking rather difficult.

As Gabrielle and Agnes reached the doorway of the house, three girls were coming out and a woman was passing in. The woman paused for a moment, and uncovering a pasteboard box, said to the girls, " I have his habit here. It is very pretty."

The girls examined the brown and white silk habit,

answering that it was "lovely looking," and then one of them remarked, loud enough for Gabrielle to hear, "Isn't it sad! Just think, she was to have been married to him next month, and her wedding-dress was ready."

"From the way she looks to-night," another of the trio added, "I shouldn't wonder if she would soon follow him."

Gabrielle listened to their words with a kind of fascination, and then clutched her sister's arm, while a cold chill passed over her. The black wagon, the tub of ice, and the words of the young girls unnerved her. The whole thing made her realize intensely, how much worse it would have been if John Fulton had died. Death took away hope. She still could hope. The thought which came into her mind as she walked along meditating was, that there was another girl in New York that night, probably just as good as she, who was carrying a heavier cross.

When the first shock of what she had seen had passed away, it left her feeling better and brighter. It helped to make her more firm in her resolution not to go moping about in hopeless despair, as she had been doing. The realization of another's greater sorrow made her own seem less. The picture of John Fulton lying in his coffin, with his white face pillowed on the silk cushion and his lifeless arms stretched across his breast, passed before her mind, and she closed her eyes in horror to shut out the vision.

"Do you know, Agnes," she said, breaking the silence, "you were right. My trouble could have been

worse in many ways. If Jack had died, I realize now how much greater would be my suffering."

They turned the corner of the narrow street, and came into Second Avenue. It was a warm night for so early in May, and the avenue was crowded. The fronts of the cafés, which dotted both sides of the broad avenue, were transformed into bowers, and great numbers of men who first saw the light of day within the confines of Bohemia and Hungary sat at round tables drinking cool drinks and talking incessantly. Besides the cafés, where all was light and life and talk, there were beer saloons, where men sat and played cards quietly; Apfelwein stubes, where cider was the only drink obtainable, and Weissbier tunnels, where morose-looking men sat in front of huge glasses of this peculiar beverage and said nothing.

When the two girls reached the northern end of Stuyvesant Park they turned to the east and walked around the park. An empty bench near the southeastern end seemed to invite them, and they entered and sat down.

The trees were beginning to look green, and their thousand tiny leaves trembled in the warm May breeze. The odor of new grass sweetened the air. Through the tall trees the electric lights shone and spluttered; some were purplish, some a reddish-brown, and some a clear white. From where the two girls were sitting they could see just across from the park the convent of the Sisters de la Misericorde, with the light from the sanctuary lamp falling like a nimbus about the figure of the Madonna on the stained-glass window.

It was in this very chapel that Agnes Crystal had made an offering of all her future happiness for the sake of Gabrielle.

Agnes had been thinking seriously of late of entering this convent. The work that she would have to do, if she entered, was after her own heart. The sisters went out into the homes of the poor who were ill and nursed them. One of the nuns, for instance, would remain up all night with a dying girl, so that her tired mother could get some sleep.

Mother Eunice, a bright Frenchwoman, the Superior of the convent, happened upon Agnes Crystal in a sick-room, and being struck with the piety and intelligence of the girl, immediately took an interest in her, and invited her to the convent. In a short time Mother Eunice was convinced that Agnes Crystal would make a valuable addition to her little struggling community.

"I must have her for myself," she said, after Agnes Crystal had left one day. "I will get the sisters to make a novena to *le bon Dieu* to send her to the poor Convent de la Misericorde."

After supper was over at the convent, on the same evening that Gabrielle and Agnes were sitting in the park, Mother Eunice came into the garden where the sisters were sitting in recreation, to summon Sister Genevieve, her assistant, to a conference in the sisters' common room.

Sister Genevieve was short and rotund, with cheeks as rosy as the polished red apples which Italian venders exhibit on their fruit-stands. The day had been a fast-

day, and the sisters were asking Sister Genevieve, who was the procuratrix of the convent, to explain how it was that she looked even ruddier and healthier on fast-days than on ordinary days.

"It is strange," one of the nuns remarked, "how Lent even seems to improve Sister Genevieve. Her cheeks looked redder on Easter Sunday than they did on Ash Wednesday."

"Oh, Sister Genevieve keeps the fast at table," one of the others remarked, "but then sister is procuratrix, and when she leaves the table she goes into the pantry and has another quiet meal. That is the reason why she looks so well on fast-days. Instead of three ordinary meals she gets about four meals, with a couple of collations."

Sister Genevieve sat on a bench, quietly listening to her reputation for mortification being assailed.

When the sisters ceased she said, "*Ah, moi*, it seems I am like Saint Athanase. I have the whole world against me. No one will give me any praise for mortification. But wait till the Day of Judgment comes; you will find, my good sisters, that the fat people will be highest in heaven, because they never get praised or pitied in this life. I have an idea!" exclaimed Sister Genevieve, leaning forward; "the next Lent I take some—some"—she snapped her fingers impatiently at her inability to remember the word—"how do you call that?"

"Call what?" inquired one of the sisters.

"Oh, it is just the same as a relation," answered

Sister Genevieve, trying in vain to recall the word she wanted.

"Father?" suggested the sister who had spoken before.

"No! no!" replied Sister Genevieve.

"Mother, perhaps you mean?" another sister ventured.

"No! no!" Sister Genevieve again responded.

"No father, no mother; you no think I can remember father—mother?"

"Brother or sister do you mean?" another nun inquired, looking up from a tabernacle veil she was sewing.

"Oh! oh! oh!" exclaimed Sister Genevieve; "you English people are too stupid; you do not know how to say things in your own language."

The nun who was sewing made another venture, which she felt would certainly end the difficulty.

"The relation you mean is called in English 'cousin.'"

"Cousin!" responded Sister Genevieve contemptuously. "Father—mother—brother—sister—cousin. You are all the same; you are all wrong. I wish, my good sister, you would keep on sewing; you are no more help than the rest."

The nuns laughed, and the sister began at the tabernacle veil again.

"Now I will explain," Sister Genevieve said, and all listened in silence. "You say Sister Genevieve is so fat in Lent, she must eat too much."

The sisters bowed their heads in acknowledgment.

"Well, next Lent I go to the apothicaire, and I say to him, 'Monsieur, I wish you to give me some medicine to make me thin.' Now, how do you call that?"

"Oh, you mean anti-fat!" they all answered in chorus.

"*Oui, oui!*" Sister Genevieve exclaimed delightedly. "Now anty is a relation—no? It is not a father, nor mother, nor sister, nor brother, nor cousin. So, Sister Genevieve knows more English than the English sisters."

It was while Sister Genevieve was enjoying her victory that Mother Eunice walked into the garden, and after kneeling a moment in prayer at a little grotto, came over to the group to take Sister Genevieve away.

"I have been speaking," Mother Eunice began, when she and her assistant had seated themselves in the sisters' common room, "to that young girl, Agnes Crystal. She told me that she intended becoming a nun, but as yet had not made up her mind in regard to the particular order she would enter. I would like," continued the Mother, running her rosary through her fingers, "to have her join us. She is very pious and intelligent—two necessary qualifications for a good religious. It is true she seems somewhat delicate, but then"—there was a twinkle in the Mother's eye as she spoke—"it is the delicate sisters who do the most work; so Miss Crystal's apparent weakness is a sort of pledge that she will be of great use to us."

Sister Genevieve smiled at the playful remark of her

superior, and answered, "Yes, it is true, the delicate sisters work very much ; but who takes care of the delicate sisters when they get sick ?"

"You mean me, I suppose, because you nursed me last week when I was ill ?"

"No, no, *ma bonne Mère*, I did not mean you alone ; you are not worse than the rest."

Mother Eunice leaned back in her chair and laughed heartily. "I see it is no use to cross swords with you. I am always beaten. But, now, what I wish to say to you is, that I want you and all the sisters to start a novena to *le bon Dieu* to send us this young girl."

Sister Genevieve promised she would make an offering of all her prayers for the next nine days for that particular intention.

"But before you begin the novena," the Mother remarked protestingly, "you ought to make an act of reparation for laughing at prayers last night. What *was* the matter with you ? I am sure you must have scandalized our young novice."

"Oh, *ma Mère* ! I am so sorry. I could not help it. You know Our Lord says, 'The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Now all the sisters laughed at me the other day when I said that the lace for the altar was five-ty-five cents a yard."

Mother Eunice tried, but did not succeed in refraining from smiling.

"Ah !" exclaimed Sister Genevieve, "I see that there is a good deal of human nature even in a Mother Superior. If it is funny for the English sisters when I say

five-ty-five, it is too funny for me when Sister Rosalie reads the prayers in French. I am sure the good Saint François de Sales himself would have to laugh, or maybe cry, when he would hear those prayers ; and, Mother, I am not yet a saint, I am only one big sinner ! So you must forgive me."

The Superior smiled and answered, " It is all right, only pray hard to *le bon Dieu* to send us that young girl to help us."

That evening a novena was started in the convent for the special intention of the Mother Superior.

Gabrielle and Agnes sat for a long time enjoying the quiet and freshness of the park.

" I'm beginning to feel an attraction for that little convent over there," Agnes remarked, glancing across the street. " Perhaps I may apply for admission to it."

" When would you think of entering ?" Gabrielle asked, with a slight tremor in her voice.

Agnes noticed her tremulous voice and hastened to reassure her.

" Not till I throw a slipper of rice after you and Jack."

Gabrielle made a half-hearted protest against so long a delay, but Agnes put her protest aside, saying she did not think that one ought to take a step for life without long consideration.

The two girls had dropped their eyes while they were talking. Gabrielle was the first to look up, and as she

did so she saw through the partly opened windows of the convent chapel the shadow of a nun. A moment later the Mother Superior of the convent came over to the window and closed it.

"I wonder what has kept Mother Eunice up so late?" said Agnes in astonishment; "perhaps one of the nuns is ill."

If she could have looked through the "storied windows" of the chapel, she would have seen Mother Eunice pause for a moment at the door, as she dipped her fingers in the holy-water font, and casting a last pleading glance at the golden door of the tabernacle, exclaim, "You will, *mon Dieu*, direct that young girl to us, to help us nurse your poor sick and dying ones?"

A few moments later, the cry of a park policeman for all persons to leave the park startled the two girls, and almost simultaneously the clock on a neighboring church struck eleven.

They hurried along the winding path until they reached Second Avenue, where they hailed a passing car. The great crowds which had filled the avenue when the girls walked up it were now gone, though the cafés were still brilliantly lighted and well filled.

The only other occupants of the open car besides themselves were a father, mother, and four children, evidently returning from a picnic in the suburbs of the city. Their arms were filled with bunches of lilacs and wild grasses, the pleasant aroma of which the wind

carried back to the girls, who sat in the rear of the car.

Gabrielle buttoned her thin jacket about her throat to protect herself against the chill wind which blew through the car. She slipped her arm around her sister to keep warm, and her teeth chattered.

"You are cold," Agnes said, taking Gabrielle's hands between her own.

"Yes, a trifle."

"Then throw my jacket over your shoulders." She slipped off her jacket as she spoke.

"Oh, no!" Gabrielle protested; "you may get cold yourself."

"There is no fear of that," Agnes replied, at the same time throwing her jacket over her sister. "It is not very chilly, but you have been so worried, that you are more susceptible to the cool breeze."

Gabrielle caught her hand and gave it a little squeeze of gratitude.

"You are always sacrificing yourself for me. I believe you ought to be canonized after you die."

Agnes smiled. "Perhaps if a war breaks out, and I go as a nun to the battle-field, I may get in front of the wrong end of a cannon, and then I shall be cannonized before I die."

Gabrielle laughed so loudly at this old joke, which she had never heard before, that the youngest of the children, a child in its mother's arms, awoke and began to cry. The sleepy mother turned angrily around, and

glaring at the two girls, exclaimed, " Make your mouth shut !"

Gabrielle subsided.

No one hailed the car, and so it swung down the avenue very rapidly. Big drops of rain began to patter on the street, filling the air with the unpleasant odor of dry dust from the street. Two street-sweepers dashed by in a mad race, looking, as they galloped along, like Roman charioteers.

A few moments later the two girls were walking along the street on which they lived. Everything was still save for the noise issuing from a basement in which a singing society was holding a rehearsal.

Gabrielle and Agnes paused on the top of the steps leading to their house, and Agnes noted with satisfaction that Gabrielle took an interest in watching the singers.

The men sat around a long table with steins of beer in front of them. They were in the middle of a drinking chorus, and as they thundered through it in jerks, one little man, who sang tenor, kept high and clear above the rest. When they came near the end of the song his voice distanced all others, and he rose from his seat in the struggle and pelted the ceiling with his metallic tones, reaching the end of the chorus in a wonderfully clear, ringing, high note. The dozen members of the coterie clapped their hands or beat on the table with the empty steins, and the president of the society, who was standing next to the tenor, almost drove his

immense hand through the little man's back by way of applause, sending him half-way across the table.

But the little man did not mind the blow in the least, though for a few moments there was not much breath left in his body. Others had tried to hold that note, but no one had ever succeeded as he had done. It was a joy forever to him.

He pulled himself together as best he could, and smiling at a young lad behind the bar, exclaimed in the tone of a conqueror, "Fritz, fill up doze steins again!"

Gabrielle enjoyed the scene so much that the smile had not left her face when she entered her mother's rooms.

"Do you feel better, Gay?" her mother asked, noting with great relief the happier look in her daughter's eyes.

"Very much," she answered.

Agnes described to her father and mother the scene they had witnessed from the door-step.

"Well, those Germans are a wonderfully peaceable people," Mr. Crystal said when he had heard Agnes's recital. "You wouldn't find a man who was born in the part of Ireland that I came from who would tolerate having his back nearly broken, even by way of applause, without returning the compliment. The Germans are certainly quiet and peaceable."

"The Germans quiet and peaceable!" exclaimed Mrs. Crystal. "I don't see how you can say that, when you

know they keep us awake two nights every week in the warm weather with their everlasting shouting. If they could sing, I wouldn't mind it so much ; but it is all a fiction about German singing societies being able to sing. Why, I will guarantee," continued Mrs. Crystal as she warmed up to the subject, " that I can go to any French village in Canada, and get the blacksmith, the cobbler, the tailor, and the carpenter, and with half of the rehearsals, they will sing far better than any German singing society in this neighborhood."

" Good !" exclaimed her husband, applauding with his hands ; " that's the most eloquent burst of oratory I have heard from you since the day we were married."

Mrs. Crystal smiled at his words and the recollections they brought back.

" Well, it's all true," she responded.

But before admitting such a severe condemnation of the singing societies it must be kept in mind that these societies made Mrs. Crystal, a naturally poor sleeper, lose considerable sleep.

Some time after the other members of the Crystal family had retired for the night Gabrielle slipped quietly out of her room in search of writing materials. When she found them she sat down and began a letter to John Fulton. She was not conscious of time as her pen sped over the paper, until she noticed a change of light in the room. It was the break of day. The first faint streaks of sunlight were visible in the sky as she looked out of the window. She hastily sealed the long letter,

which was full of encouragement and affection, and went to bed. The daylight grew stronger in the room, and the sunlight began to shine again in her own life.

CHAPTER XXV.

*" Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage ;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for an hermitage."*

GABRIELLE'S letter to John Fulton in prison was an inspiration. It filled him full of new strength and courage, and his answer heartened her. She sat for her picture in the dress she had worn for the first time the night that he was arrested.

Mr. Crystal took the picture with him when he went to visit John Fulton. Gabrielle, too, longed to go to see her lover, but he would not hear of it. He wrote that he did not want her to have any such recollections in her after-life.

The days slipped along until the month of June had begun. The last few days of May were wet and soft, but on the first day of June the sun broke over the city in a golden flood, freshening the little window and fire-escape gardens and the grass and flowers in the back yards, and filling the hearts of all with gladness.

As early as nine o'clock in the morning of the first day of June a brass band was playing " Marguerite " in one of the yards visible from the rear windows of the house in which the Crystals lived.

At the first blare of brazen notes the whole neighborhood seemed to come to life. One looking out on the scene and noticing the sudden change would have imagined that somebody must have pressed a button and set every living thing in motion. Children crowded into the yards, climbed the fences and out-houses, and filled the fire-escapes. Girls danced in pairs, and danced with wonderful grace. They joined hands and pirouetted about, separated and danced alone, came together again, holding their hands high above their heads, moved forward slowly and backward, and ended in a final rush half-way down the yard. Those who did not have partners caught up brooms, and several whirled around with cats and kittens in their arms. All the windows had occupants in them. Old men and women, who could not walk, were wheeled to the windows to look out on the lively scene. Teresa, the little Italian girl, who was fast dying of consumption, sat pillowed in a chair looking with a smile on the healthier children in the yard below. Her eyes shone with gladness. She was beyond the stage of her sickness when such scenes could make her unhappy. She longed to die.

"Mamma," she said to her mother standing by her, "how nice God must have it in heaven for little children, when they can be so happy here!"

She fell into a fit of laughing, caused by the sight of two fat boys in the yard below, who were awkwardly trying to imitate the girls in dancing. The laughing brought on a cough, and when she raised her handkerchief to her mouth there was a crimson stain upon it.

She hastily concealed the handkerchief in the folds of her dress, and smiled again. Her mother always cried when the blood came.

The band played all the popular airs, pausing once while the collection was being taken up. When the hat came back the bottom of it was well lined with pennies, and a few nickels peeped through the copper lining. As a sign of gratitude for the generous offering they had received, one half sang "The Fisher Maiden," in German, while the other half accompanied them.

Agnes Crystal stopped doing her housework and came over to the window to watch the happy children.

She had not been looking out on the interesting scene many moments when the ringing of the bell called her away.

On opening the door she was greeted by the young lad whose dying mother had begged Agnes to watch over him.

"Good-morning, Miss Crystal," he said, twirling his hat in his hand in an embarrassed way and hitching up his trousers.

Agnes Crystal's face brightened and showed how glad she was to see him, as she reached out her hand and replied, "Good-morning, Eddie; it seems an age since I last saw you." She eyed him critically for a moment, and then asked, "Are you working still?"

"I was until this week," he answered; "but I've been laid off until next month, as the boss ain't got anything for me to do."

"You had better come upstairs and have a cup of

coffee," she said, inviting him into the hallway and closing the door.

"No, thanks," he answered; "I just dropped in to ask you to do me a favor."

She saw from his nervous manner that he would not enjoy the coffee, and so she very sensibly did not insist on his accepting the invitation.

"What is the favor you want?" she queried.

"I was thinking of asking you to say a prayer for me. I'm trying to do something, and I ain't got any luck; so I says to myself last night that I'd queer the whole thing if my luck didn't change, and that's why I came to see you."

"Certainly I'll pray for you," Agnes responded; "you are looking for work, I suppose, and can't find it?"

"Oh, no," he exclaimed; "it ain't about work. I don't want you to pray for me to get work."

He spoke in an anxious way, as if afraid she might waste her prayers on a wrong intention.

"But you would like to get work, wouldn't you?" Agnes asked.

"No; it's not work that's troubling me now," he answered. "It's something better than work. I'll tell it to you later."

He excused himself for calling her downstairs, and started to go, but she stopped him.

"By the way, were you at church last Sunday? You know your mother asked me to keep a watch over you."

"Sure I was there," he answered, "and I heard you singing in the choir ; ain't that right ?"

Agnes remembered that she had sung a solo on the previous Sunday, and she dismissed him in satisfaction.

He hastened down the steps, saying to himself, "That *was* a close call. I'm glad she didn't ask about the Sunday before. I couldn't tell her a lie, and I'd hate to say I wasn't there."

He walked along slowly for a few moments, and then remarked to himself, half audibly, "The whole thing is, that I've got to hunt up a steady job, and do the right thing ; but I can't until I find out who it was that took those letters for which young Fulton is doing time up the river."

When the boy left Agnes he went directly to the house in which he lived with his aunt, which was a few streets away. He climbed the rickety stairs attached to the back of the house on the outside.

"Say, auntie," he said, as soon as he entered, "I want you to do me a favor."

His aunt, who was leaning over a washtub, paused in her work, and answered a little impatiently, "Did I ever see you betther ? Ye does be always askin' favors. It's the loan of a quarter ye wants, maybe ?"

"Naw," he drawled, his feelings a little hurt ; "I don't want nothin'."

"Well, if ye don't want nothing, what is it ye want ?"

"It's only a little favor I want, see ? You know that fellow Mackey that lives in here," he said, pointing to the rooms adjoining.

"Do I know him? To be coorse I do; and if I wasn't an ould woman I'd break ivery bone in his body, the miserable spalpeen. Can ye iver think what he did to me the other day? I was carrying a big pail of ashes down the stairs, whin he came behind me and says, says he, 'Hurry up!' 'Take your time,' says I, 'and have respect for an ould woman.' And wid that, what does he do but give the pail a kick with his dirty fut and sind the ashes all over the stairs, the blackguard!"

"He did!" Eddie exclaimed indignantly, clenching his fists; "and why didn't you send for me? I'd made him eat it all up. You were slow, auntie, you didn't let me know about it."

His aunt looked at him for a few moments, and then asked, "And what could ye do against a man?"

He drew himself up and said, with great dignity, "I have friends, see?"

The incident narrated by his aunt was a welcome bit of news to the boy, as he knew it would help his case.

"Now about the favor," he began again, as he saw his aunt recommencing her work at the washtub. "I'll tell you what I want to do. I want to break a hole through this wall, so that I can listen to what is said in those rooms."

"Och, musha! what will ye want to be doing nixt?" his aunt exclaimed in horror. "Ye'll be after breaking no holes in these walls, Eddie Hayes, and have the ajint comin' 'round the foorst of the month and raisin' the rint becaze of the ruination of the property."

Eddie did not expect to gain the permission he sought

without a struggle, and so he began to bring forth as eloquently as he could all his arguments. He was sure that Mackey, who lived in the adjoining rooms with his mother, was the thief who stole the letters for which John Fulton was in prison. He came in a very simple way upon enough evidence to satisfy his own mind that Mackey was the thief. He had gone to the cellar to bring up coal one day, and noticed a large pile of new wood there. He inquired about it from his aunt when he came upstairs, and she told him that Mrs. Mackey had been scrubbing up at the post-office, and that they had let her son take away all the wood that was left over, after the repairs in the building had been made. This information did not interest him very much ; but when she added that Mrs. Mackey had been very fortunate in getting the work, as the head man in the post-office had made her a present of a new bed and a new ice-box, he was a little surprised. He inquired of his aunt when Mrs. Mackey had been working at the post-office, and when she told him the time, and he found that it was the very week that the letters had been stolen, he was startled.

Mackey had gone to the post-office several evenings to carry home wood. That was certain, as Eddie's aunt had met him with the load of wood on his return. Shortly afterward there was a new ice-box and a new bed brought into the Mackey family.

As soon as he had received this information, the boy had made up his mind what he would do. He had been playing the part of the amateur detective for over a

week when he had called on Agnes Crystal to ask her to pray for his good luck.

He began by having a companion try to draw Mackey out on the question of the stolen letters, but that plan produced nothing. In several other attempts he had also failed. He had now hit on what he judged to be a brilliant way to procure the much-desired evidence, and he finally convinced his aunt that no harm would be done by breaking a hole in the wall, as it could be concealed by hanging a few old dresses over it, and before the agent would come to collect the rent he promised to get a friend who was a plasterer to fix the wall and make it like new again.

The hole was consequently dug in the wall, and by leaning against the thin plaster which separated the rooms, he could readily hear every word uttered in the next apartment. The work of eavesdropping was confined to the night, as the occupants of the room were out during the day.

The boy listened patiently for several evenings, until his neck was stiff and sore, but heard nothing. In a few days the agent would make his visit.

"It's all nonsinse," his aunt said one night, as he took his accustomed place at the hole in the wall, "to be flustherin' around there lis'nin' to those crathurs discoorsin'. Sure ye'll niver be hearin' anything at all, at all."

Just then Eddie heard Mackey remark that he wanted the pail, as he was going out to get some beer and bologna.

This encouraged the detective, and he quieted his aunt by telling her that perhaps when Mackey and his mother got eating and drinking they might begin to talk about past things.

When Eddie heard Mackey come up the stairs again, he at once resumed his position at the wall.

The two occupants of the room were soon seated in front of a table eating bologna sandwiches and drinking long draughts of the beer. As Mackey took a drink he made a remark which neither his own mother nor Eddie understood, as his mouth was filled with rye bread and bologna. His mother asked him what he had said, and after swallowing the huge mouthful, he leaned back in his chair, and patting his breast with evident satisfaction, remarked for the second time, "I wish I could catch another letter with a hundred in it."

If a cannon-ball had struck the young detective, the effect could hardly have been more instantaneous. He rolled off the chair in his excitement, and turned a complete somersault with joy.

"Wirra! wirra! what's the matter wid ye now?" exclaimed his frightened aunt.

"He stole the letter!" Eddie exclaimed in a whisper, pointing to the next room.

"Arra musha, I'm glad it's no worse nor that! I thought it was a stroke of 'perplexity ye had been after havin'," his aunt answered, apparently much relieved.

"Hush!" exclaimed the anxious boy, as he crept back to the hole in the wall in time to hear Mackey re-

mark, "Guess it must have been that old hag falling out of bed."

Eddie understood that the words "old hag" were intended to describe his aunt, and he saved that up against his enemy.

He listened for another hour, and heard nothing. He made a bed for himself that night on the floor of his aunt's kitchen, and dreamt that he was a mounted policeman, and that a horse had run away with a carriage in which Agnes Crystal was sitting. He followed the wild animal over long roads, up hill and down dale, until he saw it making with all speed for a frightful precipice. Then he lashed his horse's flanks and stopped the runaway just as it reached the brink. The violence of his dream awoke him, and instead of finding his hand on the runaway's bridle, he saw to his dismay that he had reached beyond his bed and upset a pail of drinking water over himself.

It was not yet five o'clock, though through the open windows he could see the sun gilding a weather-vane on a high factory in the next street. He sat up in bed, a little disappointed at first when he realized that he had not stopped the runaway—a thing just in his line—but his heart beat strong within him as he remembered that he had found the real thief, and that the chance to do Agnes Crystal a favor, which would have cheered the heart of his old mother, had come to him at last.

His first thought after rising was to obliterate all traces of the water which he had upset, so that his aunt would have no cause for anger. It bothered him not a

little to think that perhaps some of the water might have found its way through the floor, and soiled the ceiling in the room below. Then what a tenement-house quarrel there would be ! At another time the humor of such strife would have appealed strongly to him, but at present he was engaged in a very serious business, and anxious to offend his aunt as little as possible.

After he had eaten his breakfast and heard no complaint from the people below, he hunted up his fishing tackle, and on finding it, announced that he might be expected home at supper-time with a mess of fish. He stopped on the way to the river to buy a number of sand-worms for bait. Then he continued walking until he reached a favorite fishing spot, just opposite the lower end of Blackwell's Island.

All the bright summer day he sat on the long dock fishing and thinking. Whenever he would hook an eel, he would chuckle to himself and exclaim, "Got you this time, Mackey, you slippery wriggler."

A few idlers came and watched him. Some small boys who had been swimming under the dock also paid their respects to him, but he read what he called "the riot act" to them. He told them that they could only remain provided they kept perfectly quiet, and he gave as a reason that eels never bite well on Thursday, because they know Friday is a fish day.

The boys, who knew him, found him particularly unattractive that day, and therefore left him, to go back under the dock to take their fifth or sixth swim.

The river was alive with craft all the day. Saucy little tugs ran in and out among the wharves, tugging laboriously in front of huge scows and canal-boats. Barges with excursion parties sailed up the river, the strains of music drifting over the water to Eddie's ears. Now and then the shining steam-yacht of one of the city's millionaires cut through the blue water like a sea-gull through the air.

The morning passed away, and the prisoners on Blackwell's Island came back to the penitentiary for dinner, their white suits shining in the bright sunshine which flooded the green slopes that served as a background. Before he realized it, Eddie saw the first one of the Sound steamers making its way up the middle of the river. In a little while others followed, their decks black with passengers. It was growing late, but he found himself so happy sitting alone, watching the boats on the river and the ebbing tide, and listening to the shouts of the small boys in swimming as the huge rollers from the steamers washed over them, that it seemed impossible for him to start for home.

At last he had come, after much deliberation, to a conclusion in regard to his manner of acting toward Mackey. To begin with, Mackey had brought untold misery on Gabrielle Crystal, and therefore on Agnes herself. He had kicked a pail of ashes over the boy's old aunt, and was, moreover, the occasion of making him lose several nights in listening for information at the hole in the wall. Before then putting the police on the

track of the real post-office thief, Eddie concluded that he would first take the law into his own hands.

The sun disappearing in the west had colored with patches of red the glass in the windows of the houses and factories over the river, and mothers with sick babies had begun to stray down to the dock in the cool of the evening for a breath of air, before he gathered up his tackle and fish and started home.

The large mess of fish was compensation to his aunt for the lateness of the supper.

After the evening meal was over, Eddie took up his station once more at the hole in the wall. After listening for some time he heard the rattling of a tin can, which told him that Mackey was going for a pint of beer.

The boy then put on his hat and slipped quietly out of the room and down the stairs. A friend of his was hiding in the alley until Mackey would make his appearance.

The friend, as Mackey came along, began to sing in a maudlin way and walked along the dark alley, swinging from side to side like a drunken man. When he came near to Mackey he gave himself a sudden pitch and stumbled into him, knocking the empty can to the pavement.

"Why don't you look where you're going, you fool?" Mackey exclaimed.

He may have intended to say more, but the other was too quick for him. They clinched and swayed to and fro for a moment, but it was an unequal battle, and

when Mackey gathered himself together, he was a badly punished man. He made his way back to the house, and went to bed.

The next morning Eddie walked up to the sergeant at his desk in the police station, and asked if Detective Whalen was in. The sergeant rang for the detective, who came into the room, greeting the boy familiarly.

"Say, detective," Eddie began, "I've got a daisy case for you."

The detective drew up a couple of chairs, and the two seated themselves.

"You recollect that young man named Fulton who is doing time for stealing from the post-office? Well, he's innocent of that robbery."

The detective looked at him in surprise and doubt.

"Sure! He never touched a cent of that money. I know the thief, for I've heard him say he stole the letter."

The detective grew still more interested, and asked for proofs.

"It will be the prettiest piece of work that's been done in this ward in many a day. You'll get a promotion sure! All the newspapers will be full of it—'Innocent man sent to Sing Sing! Great work by Detective Whalen!' See?"

A smile lit up the detective's face at the enthusiasm of his informant, and he once more asked for a statement of the case.

The boy ran over all the work he had done and the information he had gathered. The detective was thor-

oughly satisfied, and asked him not to mention the matter to any one else.

That evening, instead of Eddie being at his accustomed place, Detective Whalen was on watch. Mackey was asleep when the detective began to listen, but a little while afterward he awoke, groaning with pain because of the drubbing he had received the night before.

"Oh!" he exclaimed to his mother, "wait till I get well! I'll never let up till I put that fellow in a hole. I'll fix him for doing me up, even if I have to go to prison for it."

His mother, with a worried look on her face, came over to his side and smoothed the pillows under his aching head.

"I'm afraid," she answered, "that that money will never bring us any luck. It's nothing but trouble we've been having since young Fulton went to jail."

Mackey turned over angrily in the bed and cried, "What's his going to prison got to do with my fight? It ain't my fault Fulton was sent up the river. It wasn't me, it was that crazy jury that did it."

His mother did not pursue the subject any further, and Mackey turned again toward the wall, moaning with pain.

The detective made a few hurried notes in a small book, and then coolly rose from his chair and remarked to the boy, "I have him."

"Did you hear anything?" Eddie asked.

"Everything," the detective answered.

"Well, you kept pretty quiet about it."

The detective smiled and said, "This may be the making of me, Eddie ; and if it is, I won't forget you."

"Don't mention it," the boy replied.

CHAPTER XXVI.

*"Hath she not then for pains and fears,
The day of woe, the watchful night,
For all her sorrow, all her tears,
An over-payment of delight?"*

THE evening after Mackey had his one-sided encounter in the alley, Gabrielle Crystal was standing at one of the windows of her home looking out into the night. She watched the big drops of rain splashing in a little lake of water on the opposite side of the street. Big tears, big as the rain-drops, slowly formed and filled her eyes and then rolled down her cheeks. Save for one or two children who ran through the rain to a drug-store on the corner, there was little excitement in the street. The Italian vender's stand was bright, but deserted. A policeman in a rubber coat came along, trying now and then the doors of the closed shops and peering inside.

In the stillness she could hear the voices of a group of lads who were huddled together in a covered wagon singing,

*"All merry boyish comrades
Kind recollections bring,
All seated there in Duffy's cart,
On summer nights to sing."*

Then came the admonition of the policeman, "Don't make so much noise or I'll have to chase you."

Gabrielle had made her great act of reconciliation to her sorrow the night she had been convinced by her sister's arguments that though John Fulton was in prison, there was still the hope left of happier days. But sometimes the picture of her lover in jail would rise up before her, and the wound would open again.

Often when sailing up the East River she had seen the prisoners marching along in lock-step, and a dull pain struck her heart as she thought of John Fulton in the striped prison suit.

While she was standing at the window thinking of these things her father entered the room softly, and came over to her side.

From the time that the trouble began he had said very little to her, leaving the work of consoling her to his wife and Agnes. But Gabrielle understood from the way that he looked at her at times how much he felt for her.

"What's the matter, Gay, crying?" he asked gently, as he laid his hand on her shoulder.

She started a little with a nervous fear, not having heard him enter the room. Then the tears came faster.

"You must try not to grow so despondent. Put your trust in God, for, as the Scripture says, 'He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.'" Mr. Crystal, like a great many others, invariably credited to Scripture Laurence Sterne's famous line.

Gabrielle ceased her crying and dried her eyes.

"For a long time I have been wanting, Gay, to tell you something, but I am afraid that I have not had the courage to do so. Perhaps I had better tell you now, and make my mind easier."

Gabrielle looked at him in wonder, but did not understand.

Her father remained silent for a few moments, and then slowly began. "It was near the end of the first year of my married life, just after you were born. The nurse who was attending your mother gave her a cold drink, which brought on a chill. When the doctor came he said that pneumonia had set in, and that he feared it would end fatally. I consulted with your mother, and then went for a priest.

"I remember the night very well, as it was the bitterest winter's night New York had felt for many a year. I made my way to the Rectory, and a young priest answered my summons.

"When he had come to the house I watched him make his preparations to give the last sacraments to your mother, and when I saw that he was about to give her Extreme Unction, I lost hope entirely. In my anguish I caught hold of his hand to restrain him.

"He turned toward me in surprise and inquired, 'What's the matter?' 'Does that mean it is all over?' I asked. 'Not necessarily,' he answered, 'but your wife is very ill, and I hardly think that she can recover now.' My courage failed me then, and I broke down. The priest laid aside the little gold box containing the

oil, and came over to me. 'I was only ordained a few days ago,' he said, resting his hand on my shoulder, 'and this is my first sick call. Perhaps if we kneel—a young priest and a young father—and pray together, God will hear our prayers.' So we knelt down, and while we prayed a strange idea came into my mind. I thought that if I would make a great sacrifice your mother might be more certainly spared. I had you in my arms at the time, and as I prayed I held you up and offered you to God if He would spare your mother."

Gabrielle drew back in astonishment at the strange news.

"I have told you now," her father continued, "a thing that has been on my mind for many a day. Perhaps I am the one who is responsible for this suffering which has fallen upon you."

She noticed the look of pain in his eyes, and hastened to reassure him.

"Oh, put such queer ideas out of your mind! Even if there was anything in what you say, don't you think I would be willing to suffer all I have suffered for mamma's sake?"

"It's been a heavy blow to you," he answered.

"Yes," she admitted; "but I am getting reconciled to it. Sometimes, like to-night, I cry a little, but I don't despair any more."

"You think, then, that it will not prove too much for you to bear?" he asked doubtfully.

"No, not at all," she answered. "I am keeping strong for Jack's sake."

She smiled at him to convince him, and then she took his arm and they went through the rooms to where Mrs. Crystal and Agnes were sitting.

The rain continued during that night and the next day. The asphalt pavement shone like ebony, and the streets were as quiet as the streets of a village.

Eddie Hayes had been instructed by the detective not to speak to anybody concerning the information they had gained at the hole in the wall.

But the boy was anxious to lift a great sorrow from Agnes Crystal's family, so he found it impossible to keep the matter secret ; besides he knew that whatever he told them would be safe.

As soon, therefore, as he was able to make a visit to the Crystals he did so.

Gabrielle had gone off to work before he arrived. Agnes answered the door-bell.

"Good-morning, Miss Crystal," he began, doffing his old straw hat and smiling.

"Good-morning, Eddie," Agnes answered, smiling back, "you look unusually happy. Did you find steady work?"

"Naw," he replied ; "steady work would never make me very happy. It's a good sight better. Could I go upstairs and tell you about it?" he asked diffidently.

"Certainly ; I would have invited you before, only I can never get you to come further than the hall-door."

Agnes led the way upstairs and ushered him into the

parlor. He entered, and sat down gingerly on the end of a chair.

"Now tell me what makes you so happy and satisfied," she said, drawing up her chair near to his.

"It's about that money that was stolen," he began slowly. "You never believed it was young Fulton, what's engaged to your sister, who stole it, did you?"

"No ; never for an instant !"

"Well, I did for a while, and I hated him for bringing trouble on you and your folks. But lately I began to suspect it was somebody else, so I started hunting clues, and that's why I came that day to ask you to pray for me."

Agnes Crystal's eyes grew large and her breath came quickly. For a moment she let the thought that Eddie had found the real thief take possession of her. Then she crushed that hope out of her heart, lest she might be bitterly disappointed. Feigning great coolness, though the spots of red which glowed in her cheeks told another tale, she asked him what information he had gained.

"Fine," he answered. "I worked first on the case alone, and after that I handed it over to a detective ; and, Miss Crystal, as sure as we're sitting here, I know the real thief."

Agnes's face blanched as she realized what his words meant. The news was almost too good to be true, and yet she felt that he would not make such a statement if there was not something to back up his words.

"You're not speaking too quickly, Eddie, are you?"

she asked, her voice trembling. "Remember, we have suffered terribly from this trouble, and if my sister's hopes are raised and then crushed it may break her heart, you know."

"I tell you, Miss Crystal, as sure as my name is Eddie Hayes, the man that stole those letters will be in the Tombs to-night."

After making this forcible statement he related all that had happened, and Agnes was convinced that he had done a splendid piece of work.

Mrs. Crystal, who had been out marketing, came in, and Eddie had to tell the story over again to her. She burst into tears before he had finished.

"Agnes," she exclaimed, "this will be like heaven to Gay!"

The boy was anxious to depart, so as to hear more news from the detective

"If you think you have been under any obligations to me for whatever little things I may have done for your mother," said Agnes, "you have paid me back a hundred times. I'll never forget it, Eddie, as long as I live."

"Oh, don't mention it," he said, growing confused at her enthusiasm; "only for my old aunt letting me break a hole in the wall, I couldn't have done it. As soon as I hear more I'll come and tell you."

"Do, like a good fellow; we are awfully anxious," said Mrs. Crystal.

Detective Whalen proceeded on a course of action by which his work would be so thorough as to admit of no

defect, and thus gain for himself the applause of his superior officers. Here was a case that the newspapers would make a good deal of when the facts came to light, and if it was well managed, instead of being an ordinary ward detective, Mr. Whalen would have gold bands on his cap and sleeves.

In the afternoon of the same day that Eddie Hayes brought the good news to the Crystals, the detective, who had followed Mackey's mother through the streets, stepped up to her and asked her to accompany him to the police station.

Her face grew pale as she inquired the reason.

"Oh, it's only a few questions the captain wants to put to you. There was a fight in the alley leading to your house the other evening, and your son was injured; isn't that so?"

Mackey's mother took courage on hearing this, and answered, "Yes; there was a drunken loafer stumbled into my boy, and when my boy told him to be more careful, the villain beat him so badly that he was laid up sick in bed."

"Well," said the detective, "we are anxious to find out more about that fight, so please come with me."

Mrs. Mackey felt relieved, and gladly enough accompanied the detective. When they arrived at the police station he ushered her into a private room, and the captain followed them and clicked the lock after him.

"Take a seat," said the captain, bowing her into a chair. "Your son," he began, his face assuming a look of great severity, "has admitted that it was he

who stole the letter for which a young man by the name of John Fulton was sent to prison."

The next moment he turned to the detective and said, in a gentle tone, "Go outside and get the bottle of smelling-salts which is on my desk."

He then rose from his chair and went over and lifted up the pale face of the woman, who had fainted almost before his sentence was completed. When the salts were brought he placed the open bottle to her nostrils, and tenderly brushed back the gray hairs from her face. He knew his work was done. It was a hard way to do it, but it was a sure one. The smelling-salts soon revived the fainting woman, and she asked, as her staring eyes rested on the officers, "Where am I? What's the matter?"

"Nothing," answered the captain, "you have only fainted. Come over here to the sofa and lie down, and you will be all right in a moment."

The two men helped her from the chair to a leather lounge. The captain pressed a button just at the head of the lounge, and in a moment a matron appeared.

"Take care of this woman, and when you think she is fully recovered come and tell me, and I will see her again."

Then he went out to his desk and disposed of a new case which had just come in.

After about ten minutes the matron appeared at the door and signalled him. He and the detective went into the room.

"I am sorry," the captain began, "that my words

made you faint. We don't suspect you of having had anything to do with that letter," he continued, taking the fainting spell as an admission of all. "Your son has acknowledged that he is the thief, and you are only to be held as a witness. You did not urge him to steal the letter, did you?" asked the captain, innocently.

"No, no!" she answered; "I did not know he took it until he got home."

The captain nodded to the detective to intimate that they had all the evidence needed. Then, turning to the woman, he said, "I will call the matron again, and if there is anything you need, she will get it for you."

The detective's next move was to find Mackey. He searched for him for a time, but not finding him, concluded to wait till evening.

Just at six o'clock the detective leisurely made his way to the house in which Mackey lived. He climbed the rickety stairs and knocked at the door. Mackey had just come home, and was washing his face in a basin of water which he had brought in from a pump in the hallway. He was scrambling for a towel with his eyes full of soapy water when the detective knocked, and he growled out, "Come in!" As soon as he looked up and saw the officer he lost courage for an instant, but the next moment he recovered himself and remarked cheerily, "Good-evening, detective."

"The captain wants to see you," the detective said quietly. "Get on your coat and come along."

"Wants to see me?" Mackey asked, in surprise. "What for?"

"He has a few questions to put to you," replied the officer.

Mackey had done more than steal letters from John Fulton's coat, and he hurriedly went over in his mind the number of different offences he had committed.

"Does the captain think I know anything about that Jerseyman that was robbed in Blucher's concert garden? If he does, he's mistaken. I wasn't over five minutes in the place that night."

There had been a robbery, and the man who had lost his money was making a time about it, so the police were anxious to trap the thief.

"The captain just told me that he wanted to see you," the detective replied. "When you get to the station-house he will tell you why."

Mackey sullenly combed his hair and put on his coat and hat. Then he accompanied the detective down the stairs. He was thoroughly frightened. It was the second time he had been arrested. The first time by clever lying he had succeeded in getting free with a reprimand.

As he and the detective were making the turn on the last flight of stairs, Mackey exclaimed, "Oh, I forgot to lock the door, and there's five dollars belonging to my mother on the bureau! It may be stolen if I don't get it."

"All right, go upstairs again," said the detective, and as Mackey started, the detective followed him.

"You needn't bother coming up, I'll be back in a minute."

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"Oh, it's no trouble," replied the officer; "go ahead."

This little game was spoiled, but Mackey was a man of resources. He had only gone up a few steps when he turned to the detective, and handing him the key, said, "There's no use in both of us making the trip. If you'll bring me the five dollars, I will sit here and wait for you," and he prepared to seat himself on the stairs.

The detective took a pair of handcuffs out of his pocket, and reaching down, slipped them around Mackey's wrist.

"You might give me a chase," explained the officer, "if I didn't take this precaution, and the evening is rather warm for running."

Mackey turned pale and growled out angrily, "Take off those things. What have I done to be handcuffed?"

"Come along," was the detective's reply.

"No, I won't, while you keep that cuff on me. Do you think I want people to imagine that I am a thief, going that way through the streets?"

The detective gave a twist to the little pieces of ebony wood, and Mackey rose with a cry of pain. The officer was angry, and as soon as Mackey realized this, he meekly slipped his handcuffed hand into his pocket, and walked quietly down the stairs.

On coming to the door, the detective opened it and started ahead. Mackey was just inside the threshold, when suddenly he slammed the door, catching the detective's fingers between it and the jamb.

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The act was so unexpected and the pain so great that the prisoner had no difficulty in pulling the handcuff from the officer and locking the door on the inside.

In a moment he was up the few flights of stairs and out on the stairway at the back of the house. On the level with the top floor was a long bridge in mid-air leading to a factory in an adjoining street. He made his way over this bridge, until he came to the factory. He had no trouble in sliding down an iron pipe which ran from the roof to the ground below. By this time he was out of reach of the detective. He then scaled several low fences, which brought him to a rear house, through which he made his way, knocking down a child in his rush for liberty. There was only one dark alley between him and the street, and he hastened through it. He had nearly reached the end, when suddenly he pitched forward and fell on his face.

For several moments he lay stunned. Then gradually he regained consciousness. On trying to raise himself he found his wrists pinioned and a small boy sitting upon him.

"Let me go!" he exclaimed.

"Naw!" answered his captor.

"Let me go, or I'll kill you!"

"Naw; you don't mean it!"

The prostrate man made a quick movement with his head; and catching one of the boy's fingers in his mouth, lacerated it badly with his teeth.

The boy struck him a sharp blow in the face with his

other hand, and Mackey, weak and dazed from his fall, made no further effort to escape.

Eddie had sent a small boy, who was in the alley, around to the next street to tell Detective Whalen where he could find his prisoner.

In a little while the officer came through the alley, his wounded hand wrapped in a handkerchief, and a small, shining revolver showing in the other. This time he put both of the prisoner's hands in the handcuffs, and started for the station-house.

Eddie washed the blood from his cut finger at a pump in the back yard, and then hurried to bring the good news to the Crystals.

It was after the time for Gay to be home from work, and her father, mother, and Agnes were anxiously waiting for her, to tell her the good news.

She came in about half-past six, and loosening her veil from her face, dropped into an arm-chair, saying, "I am very tired ; I've had a headache all afternoon."

"We have *very* good news for you, Gay," Mrs. Crystal said. "I'm afraid to tell you too suddenly, lest you may get nervous and ill."

Gabrielle looked up at her mother, and then let her eyes roam to Agnes for an explanation. She saw in an instant that it must be something of great importance from the strange look in their faces. Her heart beat fast, and sent the blood into her olive cheeks.

"Is it about Jack, mother ? Tell me quickly."

"Yes ; it's good news about Jack. They have caught the thief that stole the letters."

"No! no!" cried Gabrielle, excitedly jumping from her chair; "that isn't true, is it? It's not certain, is it, Agnes?"

"Yes, Gay," Agnes replied, "we know it for a positive fact."

Just then a loud knock was heard, and Mr. Crystal reached over and opened the door.

"Excuse me," said Eddie Hayes, sticking in an excited face and addressing himself to Agnes, who was standing in the middle of the room, "but I wanted to tell you that the man that stole those letters has been caught, and the detective is just bringing him down the street."

Agnes and Gabrielle hurried through the rooms to the front window, and in the street below saw a man handcuffed. When he passed by they turned and walked into the back room, where Gabrielle made the boy rehearse the whole story.

After supper the amateur detective excused himself, and left the Crystals in the enjoyment of the happy turn things had taken.

He sauntered leisurely toward the Bowery, and then walked in the direction of Park Row. The long, interminable line of electric lights, together with myriads of gas-lights, made the street almost as bright as day. Hat-stores, pawnshops, restaurants, clothing establishments, concert-gardens, and cheap museums all seemed to be doing a thriving business. Pressing invitations to enter were extended to pedestrians on all sides.

When he arrived at Park Row he crossed the street,

and going into a German beer saloon, inquired of the proprietor if George Woods had been around.

From the back of the store came the salute, "Here I am, Eddie ; what's up?"

Eddie made his way to where a young man was sitting, and sat down beside him.

"I've got a great case for you ; you'll make a fifty on it sure."

The eyes of the young reporter brightened. The boy had put him in the way of making money several times before, by giving him material for a good story for the morning newspaper to which he was attached. He was therefore immediately interested, and listened intently to the story of the stolen letter and the arrest of Mackey as the boy tragically narrated it.

"Be careful of one thing," said the narrator as he finished, "and that is to give Whalen a big puff, see? He's a white man, even if he is a detective."

Having finished his story, Eddie left for home, and the reporter's pencil plied busily for two hours.

The next morning bright and early the small boy went out to the corner news-stand and bought the *Morning Call*. On the front page in heavy lines he read the following :

"Not Guilty ! An Innocent Man Torn from his Intended Bride ! Sing Sing instead of Orange Blossoms ! Detective Whalen's Clever Piece of Work ! Valuable Assistance of a Young Boy !"

Then followed the story of the crime, the conviction of John Fulton, and the arrest of the real thief.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"For better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part."

A LITTLE group of anxious watchers stood in the Grand Central Station awaiting the arrival of an evening train from Sing Sing. It consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Crystal, Gabrielle, Agnes, and Eddie Hayes.

Just as the hands of the big clock pointed to seven, the train came rolling in.

There was a rush of waiting people down the pathway which led to the train, a girl's scream, and the next moment John Fulton was holding Gabrielle faint and limp in his arms.

The trainmen smiled at what to them was an oft-repeated comedy.

A newsboy made his way into the crowd with a pewter mug full of water "for the fainting lady," and Gabrielle's eyes slowly opened and rested on John Fulton's face. When she was fully recovered the little group made its way out of the station. John Fulton hailed one of a number of cabmen who were shouting like mad to attract customers. He and Agnes and Gabrielle entered the carriage, and in a moment were rolling along the asphalt pavement.

The tragedy was over, and peace entered their hearts

as gently as the June breeze came in through the open windows of the carriage.

To John Fulton New York never looked so beautiful. He watched with interest the children playing in the parks; the circles and beds of bright tulips and geraniums, the water plashing in the fountains, and the electric lights just sputtering into life. He noticed many things that never before had had any interest for him. It was so good to be free again! A passing letter-carrier brought back to him a sad recollection for a moment, but John Fulton was too happy to be much affected by the remembrance of his own trouble.

In a short time the carriage rolled into the district where the Crystals lived. John Fulton looked out of the window and saw the familiar rows of brick houses and the same people on their way home from work. It might have been a cheerless enough sight to some, this overcrowded East Side, but it filled his heart with happiness. He leaned over to Gabrielle, and hummed softly, "Home, Sweet, Sweet Home."

Oh, it was so good to have him back again! His voice sounded in her ears and ran through her soul like an Easter hymn. They were both so very happy—perhaps as happy as the good things of this life can make any one. They had come through great suffering to find this happiness. They were enjoying the intense sweetness of the pleasure which comes after pain.

Supper was a long meal in the house of the Crystals that evening. Detective Whalen dropped in to see the

young man whom he had helped to liberate, and who would be the means of his promotion. Later the reporter of the *Morning Call* appeared at the door, to find out if John Fulton wished to make any statement.

Eddie Hayes jumped up from the supper-table at the announcement of the reporter's presence, and on John Fulton's answering that he had nothing to say to the papers, except that he found New York more pleasant than Sing Sing, the amateur detective excused himself, and joined the young newspaper man to give him more material for another startling leader.

A few days after John Fulton had returned to the city the postmaster, who had prosecuted him with great energy, sent for him and appointed him to a position of trust in the department, as an act of reparation, he said, for being the cause of sending an innocent man to prison.

This was a lucky turn for John Fulton, as it meant less work and a considerable increase of salary.

"There is only one thing left to complete our happiness, Gay," he said, after he had told her of his promotion.

"What is that?" she asked eagerly and unsuspectingly, as she looked up into his face.

"A June wedding," he replied.

She blushed, but made no answer. To have him home again was so great a blessing, that the thought of an early marriage had not once come into her mind. He interpreted her silence as not giving consent.

"I have your father's and mother's permission, and

besides I have been given a vacation, which is to begin some time this month. Have I your permission, too?" he asked, catching hold of her hand and slipping on her finger the engagement ring he had bought the fatal day on which he had been arrested.

The sight of the ring, and the memories it brought back, filled her heart with mingled pain and gladness. She turned it around on her finger, and then smiled at him through her tears. He understood.

Two days after John Fulton had been released from prison he received an urgent note from Horace Bryce, asking him to call at his house. John Fulton had noticed a change in Horace Bryce's manner for some time before the unlucky day on which the letters were stolen. The little scenes which had occurred between Horace and Gabrielle were, of course, unknown to him, and he was at a loss to explain the change that had come over his quondam friend.

When he arrived at the house he found Horace Bryce very ill, suffering from an attack of double pneumonia. The worst stage of the disease had not yet been reached, and the doctor could give no encouragement.

"I sent for you, Jack," the sick man began in a gasping voice, while the perspiration stood in big drops on his forehead and rolled down his pale cheeks, "because I want to tell you why I am lying here to-night."

John Fulton was a little surprised at the words and serious tone of voice, but he said nothing.

"Perhaps you do not know that once I was in love with Gabrielle Crystal?"

The visitor looked at the patient in astonishment, and then murmured to himself, "Poor fellow! the fever has affected his mind."

"Did you ever suspect that?" the sick man asked, turning about in the bed and propping himself up on one arm.

"No, I never did," John Fulton replied, thinking it was about the best thing to say.

"Yes, Jack, I was deeply in love with Miss Crystal, and I even went so far as to ask her to marry me. I need not say that she refused," he added, a faint smile lighting up for a moment his dull, feverish eyes. "Shortly after I found out that there was no hope for me, I heard that Miss Crystal had always been in love with you, and that, as you never seemed to realize the fact, she had made use of me to arouse your jealousy."

John Fulton's eyes opened wide with wonder, and as he looked more closely at the sick man, he asked, "Do you mean all this, Horace, or is the fever bothering you?"

"Every word of it," he replied, letting his arm fall in a despondent way upon the coverlet. "When that piece of news reached me I believed it, and I hated Gabrielle, and I think I hated you. I brooded over it for weeks, and I thought of a great many ways of taking revenge. At last a chance came, and I want to tell you now, when perhaps I am dying, of the revenge I took."

John Fulton protested against the mention of death, but Horace Bryce seemed so wrapt up in what he was saying, that he did not hear the protest.

"The night you lost the two letters I was in the post-office doing some work which I had neglected. I saw you hang up your coat, and I saw Mackey put his hand into the pocket and take out the letters. And, Jack," he continued, touching his friend's knee with his feverish hand, "I was glad. I could have saved you from going to prison, but I was crazy for revenge. I wanted to make Gabrielle suffer, as I foolishly believed she had made me suffer. Now I have had my revenge, Jack, and it is killing me."

Horace Bryce's head fell back on the pillow. His mind was relieved, but the strain of the confession had been too great for his bodily strength, and he fainted.

John Fulton rose quickly, and seeing a bottle of ammonia on a side table, hastened to revive him. When Horace showed signs of returning vigor, John Fulton gave him a glass of wine to drink, and gradually life came back. On gaining his strength the sick man began again to talk, but John Fulton protested, declaring that all was over now, and they would be good friends forever.

Horace Bryce pleaded, however, to finish, saying that it would do him good.

He began once more: "Since the time you were convicted, Jack, life has been a torture to me. My desire for revenge faded away the first day you went to prison. I knew I was responsible for your going there, and yet

if I were to confess the truth, I saw what a figure I would cut and how I would be disgraced. I had repented, but I wanted the courage to do what I knew was my duty. Night and day I worried, until the strain was too great, and then I was taken ill with pneumonia."

He paused for a moment, and asked for a drink to wet his parched throat ; then he continued : " When I found myself stretched here on my bed, the idea that I was being punished for what I had done took so strong a hold on me that I no longer hesitated as to how I would act. If I got better I would immediately tell the truth about the stolen letters, and if I died they would find a note under my pillow which would free you from prison."

He turned on his side, and after fumbling a moment, succeeded in extracting an envelope stained with perspiration. He tore it open, and handed the enclosed letter to John Fulton.

It contained an account of the theft, and a confession of Horace Bryce's knowledge of it.

John Fulton glanced down the page rapidly, and then tore it into small pieces.

" Now you have heard my story, Jack, and you see how contemptible I have been."

The look of agony and shame in Horace Bryce's eyes touched the man whom he had injured, and leaning over the bed, John Fulton ran his cool hand over the hot forehead, saying, " I forgive you everything. The person most to blame was the one who circulated the

lie that Gay had used you as a tool. You believe it was a lie, don't you?"

The look in the heavy eyes was more assuring than any words could have been. A carriage rolled up to the door, and the voice of the physician was heard in the hall. John Fulton rose immediately to go.

"One word more, Jack. What will Miss Crystal say?"

"You had better leave that to me; I will explain all." John Fulton went out one door an instant before the physician entered at another.

The doctor's diagnosis, as given to Horace Bryce's mother a quarter of an hour afterward, was the most cheering news she had yet received. With the exception of a little nervousness, the doctor said, her son was much brighter, and there was no necessity at present to order a consultation.

Late the following morning, on awakening from a refreshing sleep, Horace Bryce's eyes rested on a bouquet of red roses in a vase by his bedside. The next thing to attract his attention was a letter lying near the vase. He picked it up, and on opening the envelope, read this short message :

"So sorry you are ill. Jack has told me all. I forgive you everything. I can understand how you must have felt toward me when you came to believe what you heard. In the light of other things, I see now how, unwittingly, I may have given you reason to think as you did. It is all over now, 'forever and a day.' Agnes

and I are praying for you, so you will get better soon.

“ With great sympathy,

“ GABRIELLE CRYSTAL.”

Before eight o'clock in the morning a few days after Gabrielle had written to Horace Bryce, two carriages were standing in front of the house in which the Crystals lived. Mr. and Mrs. Crystal, John Fulton and Gabrielle entered one, and Agnes Crystal, Mary Somerset, and Stella Conway the other. Eddie Hayes could not be persuaded to take the vacant seat, preferring to sit with the driver. There was great excitement in Eldridge Street over the wedding. From a hundred children's voices went up the cry, “ Oh, ain't she nice !” as Gabrielle came down the steps leaning on her father's arm.

“ It was ever thus,” the Authoress said, as the carriages rolled away ; “ I am always going to other people's weddings. It's a wonder, Mary, that no one ever proposes to me. Do you think it's because I am too massive or too school-teacherish that eligible young men pass me by ?”

Mary Somerset smiled sadly at the question. Gabrielle's coming marriage brought back the recollection of her own broken life. But the volubility and vivacity of the Authoress killed off all tendency to sadness.

“ I wish some nice young man would be foolish enough to fall in love with me, just so I could enjoy it. I have read all that has been written on love-making, from George Meredith to Bertha Clay, and I could give

any ordinary young man points on how to do it. Wouldn't it be funny, Agnes? I would be sitting in my boudoir in Henry Street, and the young man would enter the room in fear and trembling, and in a hushed voice begin, 'Dear Stella, the moment has arrived in which I am about to put to you a question which, if answered as I hope it will be, will not fail to make my happiness complete.' When he had finished I would answer, 'Excuse me, kind sir; I am very well read on this particular subject, and I don't think your manner of proposing is according to the best models. Let me show you how it is done.' Then I would make him sit down, and I would teach him how they do those things in fashionable novels."

The carriages drew up in front of an old-fashioned brown-stone church, and the Authoress subsided. Eddie Hayes jumped from his seat and opened the carriage doors. It was not yet eight o'clock, and the streets were still filled with people on their way to work. Some of them recognized John Fulton, and whispered the romance of his marriage to the others, who had stopped to see the bride.

The wedding was a pretty one: Everybody in the church knew of the events which had preceded it, and seemed to take a personal interest in the ceremony. The small boys on the altar carried themselves with unwonted dignity, and the singers in the choir put their hearts into the music. The amateur detective, though rather youthful, was chosen to act as best man.

The morning sunshine fell in a stream on the bright

red carpet of the sanctuary, and made a golden walk up the steps of the altar for the young people. The lighted candles seemed to dance for joy in the breeze, and the odor of June roses filled the church.

When the ceremony was finished, and the priest had prayed that the union would last in eternity, Mr. and Mrs. Fulton walked down the aisle to the glad music of a wedding march. The crowd outside of the church, in the meantime, had grown considerably, and when the young couple appeared they received an ovation such as was never before given to any bride and bridegroom on the East Side.

After the wedding breakfast, John Fulton and his wife took a carriage and drove to the railroad station and boarded a train for Canada. They were to spend the time of their honeymoon in the little village in which Mrs. Crystal had been born and wedded, and where some of her relatives still lived.

As Gabrielle sat in the whirling train with her husband beside her she thought of many things, and a sigh escaped her.

On her husband asking in surprise what was the matter, she answered, "I was just thinking of poor Agnes. If she could only be as happy as I am now!"

Agnes Crystal sat at home reading a letter from Clara Harkins. It ran as follows :

"CONVENT OF THE ———, ST. ALOYSIUS' DAY.

"MY DEAR AGNES: I am 'at home' at last. I am not, after all, to become Mr. Parker's wife, but a nun. I came here with my father's approval one week ago,

and in a month I shall put on the habit. My father and mother bitterly repent of their manner of acting toward me. A great change has come over my father especially. He is considerably poorer than he was. Mr. Parker saved him from losing everything, but his losses were great. I am not sorry, as it has had a good effect upon him. He is going to close out his business and live in retirement. He says that he sees now the folly of living for money alone. Last Sunday he went to Mass, the first time in nearly thirty years. I cannot tell you how great is my joy because of this change in my father.

"You must come up to see me the first chance you get. My love to Gay.

"Yours as ever,

"CLARA."

Agnes, silent and still, gazed out of the window. Her mind was full of strange thoughts. In the morning papers she had read that Mackey had been sent to prison the day before. Beside Clara's letter lay an open telegram offering congratulations to John Fulton and Gabrielle, and saying that the doctor had pronounced Horace Bryce out of danger.

"It's an odd world," she murmured to herself, "and I pity poor Gabrielle, who has to live in it."

In another room a mother sat alone, and hot tears were burning her eyes. She was thinking of the day when she would have to part with her younger daughter.

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